THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ISIS

THE MUSLIM STATE IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

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To My Grand Daughter, Tal Israeli
For Launching her Professional Career
Of Creativity, Beauty and Aesthetics
At the London College of Fashion
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Acknowledgments

In the summer of 2014, a previously marginal organization that few had heard about, headed by an obscure self-declared cleric warrior that no one had paid attention to, suddenly erupted into public awareness, first in the Middle East and then in the rest of the world, when it began to make amazingly successful inroads into vast parts of chaotic Syria and Iraq, and then launched deadly attacks on non-Muslims that came under its jurisdiction and began to execute Westerners who happened to venture into the territories under its control. Only then did the world public realize that it was a Sunni Muslim gathering of fanatics, led by cleric Baghdadi and self-named *"Da'ish"* (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS), which was intent on spreading its rule by the force of conquest in those critical areas of the Middle East.

That movement, which made stunningly rapid gains in those areas of the Arab world, and in so doing attracted volunteer youth from the Muslim world as well as from the West, soon came up with the assertion that it was aiming at establishing a caliphate, harking back to the ideal mode of government that had been prevailing in the post-prophetic Islamic world (after AD 632, when the Prophet died) and until the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I (1914–18). One became necessarily intrigued by the many questions that were raised: What made that petty Muslim cleric to aspire so high as to wish to declare himself a caliph? Who were his followers, what was the secret of his sweeping success, and what were his chances to succeed?

For any keen observer of the Muslim world, the comparison was compelling to the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan in the 1990s, where, taking advantage of the chaotic situation generated by the lasting civil war and the devastation it inflicted, a local cleric, Mullah Omar, followed at first by his *madrasa* students (*Taliban*) in the religious center of Qandahar, took control of that city and then of all Afghanistan. There too, thousands of volunteers had flocked from most Islamic countries, financed by Saudi Arabia and trained by the CIA, who were seeking to defeat the Soviet power which had invaded on Xmas day of 1979. After the Soviets were routed and retreated (1989), a civil war erupted between the warring

factions for the control of the country, which only added more destruction and disunity to the unfortunate Afghani people. The emergence of the Taliban on the scene was the main factor which reunited the country and imposed peace and order under a very strict puritanical regime (1996–2001), until the American incursion in 2001 removed it.

There are so many parallels between the two situations, notably the American intervention, aided by some of its NATO allies, that it is tempting to probe the similarities and differences between the two and perhaps try to draw some lessons from the American fiasco in the first on the advisability of its conduct in the second. The major differences between the conditions in which these wars were/are being waged are already clear nonetheless: the Americans at first were attracted to Afghanistan in order to defeat the Soviets there at the height of the Cold War, and then they were compelled by September 11 to turn against their former Afghani allies there and to try to install a Western-style democracy, which continues to be threatened by the Taliban that are making a come back. In Iraq, where the Americans had invested thousands of lives and hundreds of billions of dollars in the decade of fighting and reconstruction (2003–12) and a genuine attempt to let Western democracy take root there, the threat posed by IS (ISIS) is not directly to the United States but to its Arab allies in the area, hence the latter's half-hearted joining of the American-led battle there. These are the issues we propose to tackle in this book.

As always, I am indebted to my home-base, the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at Hebrew University, for affording me the office space and facilities, as well as the financial aid for this research, and to my diligent assistant, Enav Hecht, who has intelligently and effectively helped to search for materials on this issue in the making and sorted it out to facilitate the writing. I am grateful for this generous assistance, for the scholarly ambience, and for the collegial exchange of ideas which accompanied me throughout and which are essential for any research to come to fruition. But all the errors of fact, misapprehension, or interpretation remain solely mine.

Jerusalem, Winter 2014

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ISIS in the Web of Radical Muslims

In the past several decades, there has been talk among scholars, journalists, and politicians alike about an Islam of the minority “bad guys,” those extremist, fanatic, and radical fundamentalists who resort to violence, in order to enforce their brand of Islam on the rest of their coreligionists, who are supposedly the peaceful and moderate members of the majority of Muslims. This distinction, which was quantified by some in percentage points—15 percent for the minority and 85 percent for the majority—has created the temptation to produce a wishful but erroneous difference between the “moderate” Islam of the “peace-loving” majority and the “radical” Islam of the belligerent minority, as if there were two separate doctrines of Islam, the one amicable, to be placated and befriended, and the other bellicose, to be shunned and fought against. What has been termed “Islamic terrorism,” this construct being at all permissible in the government systems of many Western countries, where one can still speak freely and reveal the truth, was attributed to the bellicose type of Islam, while the rest of the Muslims, like the rest of the humanity, were dubbed the “victims” of Islamic fundamentalism. This distinction has allowed the critiques and victims of violent Muslims to condemn them in the most blatant terms without exposing themselves as “Islamophobes” or “racists,” as if multiethnic and multicultural Islam were a race or, if they were themselves Muslims, as “traitors” to their faith. Never mind that 15 percent out of 1.5 billion Muslims are in themselves a big-enough threatening mass of over two hundred million, even if there were no positive majority to dilute them.

The eruption of this distinction between two brands of Islam in the past few decades was not without antecedents, if we bear in mind that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Salafi Islam had made its attempts to assert itself against the background of foreign colonial rule in Islamdom. In the second half of the twentieth century, two momentous events shook the

Muslim world, both external, and, as Hassan Turabi put it, necessitated a Muslim response:

> The historical test for Muslims has always been to recover after every setback, seeking through the revival of faith, the renewal of thought and the resurgence of action to salvage religion from temporal containment and ensure its progressive development, relevance and continuity in history.[1]

As Turabi has viewed it, the present cycle of Islamic resurgence reassures that "the Unitarian principle of Islam shuns any variance or discrepancy between status quo and ideal, for the basic religious doctrine of Islam is one that unites the relativity of human existence to the absoluteness of the divine." Regarded in this light, and though Islam remains one, based on the same Unitarian doctrines, like the Five Pillars *(Arkan)* and the Foundations of the Faith *(usul-al Din)*, it does recognize the distinction between the pragmatic Muslims who consecrate the status quo and fear violence which might reverse it, those we call the conservatives, and the revolutionaries that we dub "radicals" who seek the ideal, to attain it here and now, even if and when violence is necessary to reach that goal. And when the radicals use violence, it is precisely because they are as Unitarian as all the rest and they wish to strictly impose the same doctrine of Islam that the others have neglected. Thus we cannot speak of "moderate" Islam which does not exist or of "radical" Islam which its critiques accuse it to be, but of moderate and radical Muslims, both of whom are bound by the standard doctrine of their faith in their daily struggle to practice it the best way they can, as long as the structure of the one-fit-all core of the doctrine and the modes of its application are preserved. For example, the obligation of jihad, which is hallowed by all Muslims, may be in temporary abeyance for some Muslims who shun confrontation with the entire world in the present state of affairs, while the radicals advocate its imposition here and now, regardless of the present balance of power in the world, knowing that they are protected by Allah as long as they fight in His Path.

Four major events have instigated Muslims in the second half of the twentieth century to attempt to recover from the setbacks they had been meted out by the outside world. The first was the rise of the Muslim Brothers in the 1930s, the second was the rout the Muslims suffered at

Israel's hand in the 1967 Six-Day War, the third was the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1978–-79, and the fourth was the collapse of Communism and of the Soviet system in the 1990s. The story of the Muslim Brothers will be dealt with in detail here. Apart from the ambience of despair and depression it occasioned in the Muslim world, the year 1967 also generated a countercurrent of religious revival throughout Islamdom, especially following the October 1968 Cairo Islamic Conference,[2] which convened together chief clerics and scholars from the entire span of the Muslim world, from Morocco to Indonesia. In the painful soul-searching deliberations, which attempted to ponder the reasons for the unprecedented "glorious defeat" in modern times, they came to the conclusion that, while Islam had reached its climax close to the time of the Prophet and his immediate followers, when it was upright and ruled by the standards set by the Messenger of Allah, it was the Western corrupting influence on Islam, dubbed "westoxication," which had caused its demise. The lesson was inescapable: only a return to Islam and its ancient norms could rescue it from decline. In other words, while Western utopia for progress and improvement is projected some time into the future and may be attained gradually by determined social, political, economic, and intellectual measures, Islamic utopia was located in the ideal time of the Prophet and his immediate successors in the past, and all that was needed was to strive to approximate the achievements and the unattainable standards set by those righteous generations, by studying and applying them in the real world. Hence the spread of many *"salafi"* movements, connoting a return to the era of the *aslaf*, that is, the ancients.

Third, the Islamic movements, which emerged under various appellations, were not at ease with the Soviet alliance that had been thrust upon Islamdom as a matter of convenience, and often at the instigation of their own regimes. Therefore, as soon as the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, and the remainder of the Communist parties in the Arab world withered away for want of commitment to the idea of Communism, a giant vacuum was created that needed to be filled urgently. In Israel, for example, one of the very few places in the Middle Eastern region where a Communist Party was legal, an Islamic movement emerged to take over local politics which had been dominated by the "communists." Even those who remained within the Communist Party had to change their name, exactly as other communists in the rest of the world had done. Then, the wedding of

convenience between Islam and Communism came to an end. Russia, who inherited the Soviet Union, remained a close ally of the least Islamic regime in the Islamic world, that of the Alawites of Syria, but defended at the same time the cause of Iran, the strictest Islamic regime, in an attempt to regain what it had lost in the Middle East by its own decline. But the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan in 1989, which put an end to their ten-year "Vietnam-like" venture, only precipitated Soviet's prestige to its lowest ebb in Islamdom, which had also been radically eroded by the cruelty of the two eruptions of the Chechnya War, where Russia was accused of genocide against a Muslim people.

For the world of Islam, the Soviet demise in Afghanistan meant more than that. It meant that Muslim *Mujahideen* were able, with their primitive weaponry, but with the aid of other Muslims, namely the Muslim volunteers who flocked in from the entire Islamic world, to beat one of the two Superpowers and force it to retreat. The conclusion was swift and clear: the other Superpower (America) could not be far behind, an assumption that was not off the mark in view of the upcoming retreat of the United States from that unfortunate land and its likely takeover by the *Taliban* once again when foreign intervention ends in 2014 or 2015. Moreover, the very intervention of the Soviets in Afghanistan on Christmas 1979 had been motivated by their fear that the Islamic upheaval which began with the Iranian Revolution one year earlier might seep into their five Islamic republics of Central Asia that were adjacent to Iran (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan) and into its Islamic Republic of the Caucasus, Azerbaijan, which borders on Iran. They had hoped to stem that danger by demonstrating that the Iranian Revolution had been a "paper tiger," but they eventually failed, much to the delight of the Muslim radicals worldwide, who saw the moment fit to organize their forces and launch their *coup de grace* onslaught on the West and the Jews.

The end result was that all those six Muslims republics were freed from the Soviet yoke and became independent once the Soviet Federation crumbled. It was very tempting for Muslims across the world to conclude that it was "their" *Mujahideen* who were to be credited for that achievement, and that thanks to other Muslims, not to foreign powers, their brethren were liberated and the number of Muslim countries increased to 57, almost one-third of the world count in those days when the membership of the UN amounted to 180. The success of the jihad fighters necessarily

increased the prestige of jihad wars sky-high and encouraged other jihad fighters to flow and cluster around current fields of combat, like Syria, Iraq, Mali, Kashmir, the Middle East, and Somalia and leave their mark on *jihadi* activity. The Muslim mood in the world was upbeat, not only due to the numbers of believers which approached the billion mark then, billing the number of their followers as "one quarter of humanity," but also boasting Muslim identity and promoting its international success. Indeed, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC, later Cooperation) that had made its debut in 1968, as a result of the arson of the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, for which Muslims across the world rushed to falsely indict Israel of its premeditation, was a manifestation of that newly found pride. The first Rabat Summit Conference of the organization in 1968, under the pretext that it was urgent to come to the rescue of Jerusalem, was concluded with a unanimous decision to establish a Jerusalem Committee, headed by the host of the conference, King Hassan, who hastened to call the central square in Fez "the Jerusalem Plaza," to evince his loyalty to Islam. He had been much maligned by many Muslim radicals for "selling off" to America, France, and Western values and for maintaining secret contacts with the Israelis, all unforgivable sins in Islam. He was certainly a moderate Muslim, and his joining the conference did not make him a radical one, but by convening it and heading one of its important committees, he signaled that he was responsive to the mood of the time which demanded Islamic unity in word and in deed.

Since 1968, membership in the organization kept growing by leaps and bounds, and in 1976, the incredible happened: Turkey, which under her civil and jealously guarded secular governments had avoided any official involvement with religion, suddenly yielded to the public mood and not only agreed to join the OIC, but also hosted that year's conference in Istanbul. The symbolism could not be missed: what used to be the splendid capital of the Muslim Ottoman Empire and the seat of its glamorous Sultan, who was also the caliph of all Muslims, unexpectedly admitted to her Islamic past and present Islamic identity, and joined that great association of modern Muslim states. In the long run, OIC came to encompass all fifty-seven Muslim countries, thus coming closest to a semblance of unity of all Muslims. Not since the disappearance of the caliphate after World War I, when the Ottoman Empire was dismantled, had Muslims across the world experienced that feeling of great Muslim power converging together, as if

the gathered heads of the Islamic world represented a sort of corporate caliphate that was no more. Since the Istanbul encounter, the membership grew to include such countries as Uganda who were not exactly Muslim, but were ruled by Muslim tyrants like Idi Amin Dada, and that was enough for him to draw his country into the fray. Naturally, since the rise to power of the Islamic Party of Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara in 2002, the feeling of exhilaration with Muslim power has increased, as it had done in the 1970s when Pakistan revealed its "Islamic bomb" and as the Muslim world is bound to boast again when Iran achieves its own.

Admittedly, the Iranian Revolution of 1978 has caused unease in some quarters of the Sunnite Muslim majority, which fears the aggression of the "Shi'ite Crescent," constituted by Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, to the point that some Sunnite clerics have dubbed the Shi'ites as "worse than the Jews," a "compliment" not easily disbursed to dub a rival in the Islamic world. But, beyond these divisions, which pit Iran and its satellites against Saudi Arabia and its cohorts, there is agreement between the two parties that the victory of Islam takes precedence over the theological differences between Shi'a and Sunni. For example, the *Islamikaze* acts of terror which were invented originally by Shi'ites (and were wrongly dubbed "suicide bombings") have become a favorite *modus operandi* of many Sunnite groups such as the Hamas, some PLO factions like the Aqsa Brigades, some Sunni terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan, and others. Hamas in Gaza, for lack of better, has been relying on aid from Iran, and many Muslim terrorists convene for their annual meetings in Tehran, regardless of their Sunnite affiliation.

The years following the Soviet debacle in Afghanistan also saw the rise of the "Afghani" phenomenon in the Islamic world. Tens of thousands of Muslim *Mujahideen* had indeed been recruited by American encouragement and Saudi backing from all over the Islamic world to flock to Afghanistan and help the fight against the hated Communist Superpower until its capitulation. Those Moroccan, Saudi, Jordanian, Iraqi, Chechnyan, Bosnian, European, and other Muslim volunteers had gathered in camps financed by the CIA and kept the stream of reinforcements from drying up in that hard and demanding ten-year fight against the Soviet Russians. But when the dwindling Soviet Union capitulated and the war was officially terminated, those "Afghani" outsiders started to return home and pose a local problem to their governments. Those repatriated fighters, who now

became a roving international jihadist camp, ready to go anywhere they were needed for the cause of Islam, soon turned into a major issue for their native countries. Some of them went to Iraq to fight the Americans or returned to Afghanistan to face the American allies of yesteryear, who had assisted them against the Soviets, and are now the major component of the Syrian rebels against the Assad regime and of the ISIS Movement in Iraq and Syria. One of them, probably the most renowned and the most influential, until gunned down by the Americans, was Osama Bin Laden.

Bin Laden contributed more than any Muslim at that time to debunk the myth that Muslim terrorism was due to poverty and disaffection. The South American *favelas*, those makeshift slums that surround all major cities in that continent, indeed provide a daily proof that material misery does not necessarily produce indiscriminate terrorism against innocent people. And Bin Laden's personal wealth had attested to the contrary. He could have led an easy life, like his peers in Saudi Arabia, in the opulence of his palaces, but he elected to fight for his ideas in the mountains of Tora Bora in Afghanistan, pursued by American aircraft and special forces attempting to eliminate him for a decade or more, before he was eliminated in his secret abode in the garrison city of Abbottabad in Pakistan in 2012. It so happens that the two most religiously fundamentalist Muslim countries, Saudi Arabia and Iran, are also the richest, so poverty could not have been the reason for their radicalism. While Iran continues to serve as the international hub of Muslim terrorism, it was the massive participation of Saudi individual warriors in, and financial contributions to, the world jihadi effort, which had first allowed thousands of Saudi volunteers to fight in Afghanistan against the Soviets, then for the September 11 (2001) events to happen, and currently (2014) for the continued bloodletting in the Syrian civil war and in the ISIS upheaval.

Bin Laden had met in Afghanistan the militant Muslim scholar, Abdullah Azzam, of Palestinian origin, who devoted his latter years to posing the fundaments of the aggressive universal jihad that al-Qa'ida had vowed against America and the Jews. Bin Laden, like others, was thoroughly influenced by the knowledge, the political and theological acumen, and the total devotion to the cause of that scholar and was so swayed by him that he forewent his family life and his initially positive economic activity which had made him wealthy. Upon returning to Saudi Arabia as an "Afghani," who had been hardened by the battlefield experience as a *Mujahid*, he

became restless and fanatically determined to overthrow the corrupt and elitist royal regime under which he had grown in Riyadh. But soon he was identified for the danger he posed to his peers in the Kingdom, stripped of his Saudi citizenship, which had caused much embarrassment to the relations between his country and the United States, and expelled from there. He was on the road since then, together with his nuclear family, on the lookout for a land of shelter which was Islamic enough to accept him, poor enough to vie for the funds he could provide in return, and desert and inaccessible enough for foreign powers to search for him, find him, and try to dislodge him from there. That land would serve as the physical base for his new organization, *al-Qa'ida* (literally The Base), and the metaphoric base of the world jihadi movement he was determined to found, lead, and fund by his own means.

The organization spoke about confronting "American arrogance" and world Jewry (not Israel or Zionism, as those who wish to dissimulate their anti-semitism pretend), who were seen as close allies, with Jews at the lead. They were accused of providing the ideological underpinnings for "controlling the world" under the well-known and widely diffused "world Jewish plots" and other conspiracy theories that jihadi Islam, like the Hamas and the Muslim Brothers, had liberally borrowed from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion.* Powerful America, it was claimed, was the financial and military arm which was manipulated by world Jewry to achieve its goals. This was why on September 11, al-Qa'ida attacked the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, the symbols of American economic and military power, and all over the Muslim world there was great jubilation at the sight of that horror; so popular were Bin Laden and al-Qa'ida, although some Muslim quarters were embarrassed by the scope of that horror, that they tried to impute it to the CIA or the *Mossad,* claiming that Jews were in any case involved in it.

After he was ejected from his homeland, Bin Laden sought and found a shelter in Sudan, which from 1989 came under the rule of General Omar Bashir, who later became involved in the Darfur massacre and was indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. That poor country was hungry for Bin Laden's foreign currency and was itself too involved in horrific mass murders to resent Bin Laden's terrorist scheme. For that reason, Bin Laden could settle there until the 1998 al-Qa'ida's acts of terror against the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which

raised the wrath of America due to the fatalities of hundreds of Americans and Africans. The Clinton Administration retaliated by a few bombings in Sudan and threatened the host country with more unless Bin Laden and his gang were expelled from the country. In his exploration of the Muslim map in search of a new asylum, Bin Laden identified Afghanistan as such a target. Since 1996, the Taliban had taken over the rule in Kabul and established such a strict Islamic rule there under Mullah Omar as to make Saudi Arabia look like a bastion of liberalism. The mullah was an unknown cleric who had gained spiritual control of his Taliban during the Afghani civil war. Once Bin Laden was introduced to him in Qandahar, they became close mates, and the determined Afghani mullah guaranteed asylum to his guest, whatever the price he would have to pay.

The unipolar world of post 1989, following the dramatic fall of the Soviet Union, was accompanied by its vast economic troubles and deep social problems. Added to that was the rise of Islamic radicalism, which challenged Russia's hinterland and forced it to take harsh measures against its Muslims in Chechnya and the Caucasus and helped shift world attention to a new vocabulary in the West that seemed to adopt the idea that "militant Islam" was there to be reconciled, not to be fought, despite its many outrageous outbursts of violence, not only against the West and Israel, but against its own people too. If we say, for example, that murdering Jews by Muslims is the result of anti-semitic hatred and contempt toward them, and anti-Western violence is generated by a fanatic and intolerant Muslim conviction of "westoxication" and xenophobia, then how do we explain the massive killings of Muslims by Muslims, which account for the majority of fatalities in Islamic countries: Syrians against Syrians, Iraqis against Iraqis, Afghanis against Afghanis, black Muslims in Darfur by Muslim *Janjaweed*, Muslim moderates by Boko Haram in West Africa, and other mass killings in Algeria, Lebanon, Yemen, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority (PA), Somalia, and all the rest?

The inescapable conclusion is that some trigger-happy radical Muslims, who are propped by jihad, domestic or external, display their disregard for human life, which renders execution of others, capital punishment, hijacking, kidnapping, robbery, hostage taking, beheading, mass murder, mutilation of the living and the dead, and torture as acceptable norms of conduct for them. Implementing *Shari'a* rules in their domestic penal law and, even more so, attempting to impose their standards on foreigners (like

in the cases of Daniel Pearl in Pakistan, Salman Rushdie in England, or the authors of the anti-Muhammed cartoons in Denmark, the Christians of Nigeria by the Boko Haram, the extermination of the Yazidis in Iraq by ISIS, or the beheading of Westerners by ISIS) are in themselves the best indications of the low value of human lives in their eyes. When practiced against Jews and Westerners, this view is rationalized as "anti-Zionism," or vengeance for the "crimes against Palestinians," or "self-defense," or else as the "reaction to Western arrogance and Islamophobia," and to the "humiliation of Muslims," to "desecration of Muslim values" (as in Paris and other European cities), and any other amount of trumped up rationalizations. Underlying all those instances is the burning desire by radical Muslims to impose by force their ideals, values, and rules of conduct both on their own nationals when they are viewed as "apostates," thus deserving death, and certainly on their rivals and enemies, who are often considered as enemies of Islam and Allah, and therefore are equally deserving of annihilation. No debate, negotiation, compromise, or argument is possible with this "expression of the will of Allah," and therefore no perceived offense against or deviation from these rules is tolerable or forgivable.

In view of this narrow and bigoted understanding of the world by Islam, these radicals have no compunction about literally terrorizing their rivals and enemies, be they Muslims who refuse to submit to them or non-Muslims who oppose their abusive and horrifying *modus operandi*, which includes forced conversion of non-Muslims, mass massacres, live beheadings recorded on videos, mutilation of the ded, kidnappings for ransom or political blackmail, *Islamikaze* killings (what is erroneously called "suicide bombings"), and the like. This is all justified in their eyes either by the infamous Qur'anic injunction to sow terror *(irhab)* in the hearts of the enemy, hence the common appellation of those deeds as terrorism by the West, a proposition that has also become current among Muslim victims of organizations like al-Qa'ida, Hamas, ISIS, or Boko Haram; or by the crimes they attribute to their rivals and enemies, who act in self-defense. It seems that especially nongovernmental terror organizations, like Hamas, al-Qa'ida, Boko Haram, Hizbullah, and Lashkar-e-Taiba, who are not accountable to anyone or cannot be pursued by any international body, care little about human lives and do even less to protect them and are more likely than others to take the most horrific measures

against their victims. Consequently, little or nothing is done by the international community to counter these horrors, except by certain countries that feel directly hurt or whose interests are threatened, like the United States and Israel, and feel constrained to act in response.

Moderate Muslims often accuse the radicals, who are in fact common Muslims who behave in accordance with the accepted rules of the *Shari'a* which they apply strictly, of having "hijacked" Islam or "distorted" its "real" meanings, or misinterpreted it, and they in turn are condemned by their rivals for "having abandoned the Path of Allah" or for having themselves "been corrupted by Western ideologies," or simply as "heretics." But, for better or worse, it is the ideal standards of the radicals that prevail in the Islamic world, for even those who do not live by them hold them and their practitioners in high esteem. One can simply watch the mass demonstrations in the streets of Gaza, Quetta, Casablanca, Durban, and Jakarta or in the Muslim neighborhoods of Paris, London, Sydney, Amsterdam, and Toronto to realize how much alive, universal, uniform, and popular the Muslim mantras uttered are, and the rampages which are perpetrated daily by Muslim masses of men, women, and children from all walks of life, including their leaders and clerics, of all ages. Are they all "Islamist radicals"? No, they are simply Muslims, and the common denominator which links them together is their hatred of the West and the Jews is Islam, standard Islam, under the justification of the *Shari'a,* which is promoted by their imams. While some moderate and courageous Muslim individuals will fortunately always be there to save the honor of their creed when they raise their lone voices against the abuses perpetrated in the name of their faith, the mainstream in the world of Islam, including westernized and modern professionals, intellectuals, and students, will also always be there to glorify in mirth the executions of Westerners and Jews by Muslim terrorists, to write or broadcast in exhilaration in favor of the *Islamikaze,* and to distribute in jubilation sweets in the streets to "celebrate" the death of Americans and Jews. Even when some Islamic governments turn against the Muslim radicals, like Egypt against the Brothers or Saudi Arabia against ISIS, the Muslim populace in those countries remains sentimentally loyal to them, especially when they hit the West or Israel. The best proof of that is their continued popularity and the steady stream of Muslim volunteers that swell their ranks.

It is exactly this double standard of soothing the West on the one hand and expressing identification with their fanatic kin on the other, which has been engineered by Muslims to obfuscate substance and encourage the currency of Muslim terminology, while at the same time depriving the West from its arsenal when counterattacking its aggressors in the battle against jihadism, which needs to be clarified, articulated, and understood. Words were created to transmit conventionally agreed-upon meanings. If each actor chose to lend to his words a different significance or accuse others of "distorting" their meaning, then we would no longer be able to call a spade a spade or communicate with others on any issue. These are all indications of the spreading anti-Western antagonism in Islam. Not only has the zeal in the Islamic world been directed against Israel and the West, but it aims primarily to sweep out of power their own Western-allied regimes which are regarded as American stooges. As the major Egyptian paper, *al-Ahram,* put it, "religious identity has replaced nationalist ideology,"[3] and that applies not only to Muslim countries but also amid Muslim minorities throughout their diasporas. This means that Muslim terrorism will continue to rise in both Europe and the Muslim world, hence the relevance of the present volume as a precursor and follow-up to the saga of September 11 and its aftermath. One has to nevertheless realize the distortions of the basic data of Islam by both scholars and politicians, who wish to depict a more benign and less menacing picture of the Islamic rise than it is in fact. This is done through the distinction we have mentioned above, which has become conventional wisdom among both critics and proponents of Islam. It is the artificial bifurcation between the so-called "Islamists" or radicals—the minority "bad guys" who spoil the lot of the peaceful moderates by their violent deeds, lend a bad reputation to the majority of their coreligionists, and wage war against the West and Israel—and the majority itself, which is arguably "peace loving" and shunning violence and has no quarrel with the West. It is clear that this "scientific" distinction, though pursued by some scholars of reputation and may have some empirical merit to it, has much more to do with political correctness and with a degree of sheepish *dhimmi*-like submissiveness, or fear of being accused of racism, than with historical reality.

After September 11, a talk show was broadcast by *Al Jazeera* network (representing what is known as "moderate" and "peace-loving" Islam) where the question was posed to the panelists and their viewers about

whether Bin Laden was a terrorist or a hero. The only moderate panelist, a Tunisian, was mocked and humiliated by his co-panelists and by the moderator of the show for daring to dissent from the otherwise unanimous opinion which crowned Bin Laden as a national hero. Viewers who called or emailed from the entire Islamic world were almost unanimous in the same consensus. That was not a "poll" among "Islamists," but among the rank-and-file Muslims, most of whom were supposedly the educated owners of personal computers. Yet, their reaction was "Islamist" in substance. So, where is the distinction between the supposed "moderates" and the alleged "Islamists"? Yes, there are *Islamikaze* activists who are ready to blow themselves up for the cause of Islam, in the process of killing Westerners and Jews. But they are only a handful, who are recruited, trained, financed, indoctrinated, and dispatched by a vast infrastructure of Muslim states, organizations, and individuals and are surrounded by the sympathy and admiration, often adulation, of the vast masses of the Muslim public and the mainstream press in countries that are clients of the United States or have signed peace with Israel. Who is then an "Islamist" among all those layers of activists and supporters, and who is "moderate" and "peace loving"? In the United States and Europe, it was found that several Muslim intellectuals, leaders, and clerics, who gained favor with the authorities and access to the highest echelons of power, for their supposed "moderation" and their openness to "dialogue," were later arrested for their illicit fund-raising for Muslim terrorist organizations, for inciting terrorism, or for suppressing women's rights. Did those suddenly turn from "moderate" to "radical"? No, they were the same Muslims who were perceived previously as "moderate" when they acted or refrained from acting in a certain way, and who became "Islamists" when they were caught red-handed when engaging in subversive acts. In both instances they acted as Muslims in the name of Islam. It was Western scholars and westernized Muslims who attached to them those epithets of "moderate" and "Islamists" which the Muslims themselves never recognized.

Matters are further complicated and made less comprehensible to Western minds by the paranoia and conspiracy theories that are very widespread in the Muslim world, among "Islamists" and others alike, whether Muslims are modern and Western-educated, or traditionalist and obscurantist. Those theories that are rampant even among Muslims living in the West would insist that world leaders who support Israel are Jewish (like

Presidents Reagan and Bush) and that the major violent acts that shook the world, like the world wars, the world revolutions, and September 11, were all the fruit of Jewish premeditation and execution. Americans and other Westerners are accused of plotting against Islam, standing behind all the civil wars, divisions, wars, and massacres that have plagued the Islamic world. Their minds are so permeated with these nonsense theories that they become impervious to logical, rational debate that is open to argument, discussion, and persuasion. Therefore, the difficulty of dealing with Muslim minds consists not only of removing the mountains of pure delusion that choke their free thinking, but also of persuading them that the very attempt to counterargue against those futilities is not necessarily part of the world conspiracy that is being woven against them. It is possible to explain their imaginary picture of the world by their need to project on their enemies the analytical shortcomings that bewitch them, but it is impossible to move them out of the illusory scenarios that they have constructed around themselves, to which they cling with a tenacity that defies and contradicts Western standards of logic and conduct. The result is that even when Muslims initiate and launch an act of violence, they accuse the West or Israel of it and dub it, or what led to it, as an act of "aggression" against them, of which they are the victims and which requires their retaliation/vengeance. The main thing is that they thereby escape the need to take responsibility for their deeds and for the policies they choose to embrace.

This reversal of facts is what characterizes the behavior of Muslim radicals who sought refuge in the West that they detest and wish to undermine, for the most part while on the run from their home regimes that they had tried unsuccessfully to topple; or who carve for themselves all manner of "emirates" or "caliphates" in Islamic lands and strive to impose on them their *Shari'a* laws, often amid the use of violence. Since they are persuaded that they fight for the Path of Allah, they certainly do not regard themselves as terrorists, and when they are arrested for terrorist activities within their host countries in the West, which had generously, naively, and self-defeatingly given them shelter and provided for their needs, they accuse their benefactors of sinning against them and they condemn their "barbaric behavior." This mechanism of denial, which posits Western democracy as just a milking cow which owes them sustenance while they owe it nothing, allows them to deny the good and the protection they get, as

they mount subversive cells to act in the heart of their countries of refuge as of right. That causes them to wreak havoc, death, destruction, and terror upon the nations that took them in, in spite of their repeated commitment to the authorities that they would refrain from political or subversive activity as a condition for being accorded the status of refugees, or else to perpetrate massacres and other abominable deeds among their own populations.[4] A sort of political denial is also adopted in the Western chanceries as well, under the belief that if they meant well for the Muslim refugees they have accepted or refrained from interfering in the internal affairs of Muslim countries, they would encounter exemplary behavior on the part of Muslims in return. Even the al-Qa'ida entrenchment in the United States and Europe and their illicit activities done under various covers were not enough to stir suspicions and to instigate the slumbering Western governments to take measures of self-defense, until the Muslim radicals struck, first in America, then in Europe, or acted atrociously against their own minorities in their own countries, and against foreign victims that they took hostage. The democratic countries of shelter which have absorbed these streams of "refugees" who arrived uninvited, now became in the eyes of the guest the "oppressors" of the poor and peaceful Muslims, like their original oppressive countries of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and all the rest.[5] And even the Western countries that launch rescue operations against Muslim tyrants in their own territory are perversely dubbed "aggressors" and "terrorists."

Three types of Muslim radicals are identifiable: first, those who operate established states, such as Iran and Sudan, where the state establishment uses its institutions and resources to sponsor its own or other Muslim radicals in the performance of their atrocities worldwide. These countries train, finance, indoctrinate, recruit, and dispatch acts of terror worldwide, like Iran training Hamas operatives in its territory or sending its Hizbullah proxies to act against Jewish and Israeli targets in Argentina and Bulgaria, using the immunity of their diplomatic pouch to smuggle in weapons and explosives; or Sudan recruiting and training its African operatives to blow up the American embassies in East Africa in 1998, or supporting the *Shabab* in Somalia. Second come the Islamic movements which seek a territorial base whence they can launch their acts of terror, though they may not strive for or attain statehood, such as al-Qa'ida, which operated from Sudan first and then from Afghanistan under Bin Laden, until it was forced to decentralize worldwide when American counterattacks disbanded and

killed its leadership. Other such movements are the Hamas, Hizbullah, Muslim Brothers, Islamic Jihad, *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, Ansar al-Shari'a,* and *Jabhat al-Nusra* in the Middle East, *Lashkar-a-Taiba* in the subcontinent, Boko Haram in West Africa, and the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan. But there is also a third interim group of Muslim radicals, who have experienced a state, or are aspiring to it, or have declared one in the making but have not yet achieved a solid base for their statehood, nor a recognition by other nations. Such have been the Hamas and their rule in Gaza, the Hizbullah and their control of Lebanon, the Muslim Brothers which maintained an elected government for a year (2012–13) before they were removed in Egypt, or the Taliban who had ruled Afghanistan for five years (1996–2001) until they were removed by the American incursion into their country. So are the insurgents of northern Mali who have declared a state there. The latest manifestation of this latter category has been the ISIS (also known as ISIL), the latter appellation replacing Syria with Levant, which explains that Syria means Greater Syria, encompassing Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel. Their program has been so ambitious to widen the scope of their declared caliphate and their initial success so as to match that of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Lately, the epithet of "Islamic State" (IS) has been adopted by this group, hinting at their aspiration of an all-encompassing caliphate, not necessarily confined to Iraq and Syria. Their success has been such that they already claim the fealty of local Islamic movements in the Sinai Peninsula *(Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis:* the Supporters of the Holy Place) and in Libya *(Ansar al-Shari'a:* the Supporters of the Holy Law), with others likely to follow. Characteristically uniting all of them, however, is their propensity to use violence, murder, terror, and the most horrible ways of coercion to impose their ways.

As these lines are being written in fall 2014, the success of IS (ISIS) has been so sweeping, in spite of the persistent American air strikes, that some local and regional radical Islamic movements, especially those who did not achieve any stunning victories in their localities, such as *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis* in Sinai, *Ansar al-Shari'a* in eastern Libya, or even *Jabhat al-Nusra* in Syria, which is the fountainhead of IS, have been swearing fealty to the caliphate in Raqqa (Syria) and asking to be affiliated with it, hoping thereby to benefit from its worldwide popularity among Muslim youth and from its vast financial resources. Bayt al-Maqdis followers in Sinai already dub themselves IS Egypt. They admitted that the strikes of the Egyptian forces

against them were successful and asked the people of Sinai to protect them and help them lift the security siege there. In a video posted in early December 2014, Osama al-Masry, the mufti and spokesman of the group, appeared next to five bodies of members of the group that were killed by the Egyptian army, and urged the people of Sinai to fight the army, arguing that "the army does not want to apply the Shari'a." Conversely, he pledged that his group "would protect the people of Sinai as long as you did not cooperate with the army, but we will come after you if you do." He also vowed to cripple the whole of Egypt to avenge the group members who were killed and showed a video of the killing of three policemen in a car.[6] Pragmatic President Sisi of Egypt seemed to be retorting in his publicized press conference of January 2015 that one billion and a half Muslims cannot continuously threaten the rest of humanity's six billion, thus acknowledging that such a threat did exist and that it had to be eliminated.

For the Muslim fanatics, the truth is one and absolute. For not only are they committed to make Islam prevail worldwide, but they see themselves obligated to enforce it and use any means, including force and compulsion, in order to rescue unbelievers and heretics from themselves. In their world, nothing else but Islam is credible, therefore there is no meaning to anything but the absolute domination of Islam since no other faith can compete and show the relativity of their validity. And that creed is so overwhelming that Muslim radicals regard themselves bound to act upon it even at the cost of their lives. In the West it seems sometimes foolish that these radicals fight and devote their lives for causes that stand no chance to succeed: when Bin Laden declared a world war on Jews and the West, he knew and understood that he would not bring America or Israel to their knees. Similarly, when the Hamas opened their missile barrages on Israel in July 2014, they knew that they would not beat Israel, but only bring death, destruction, and tears upon themselves. Nonetheless, they launched the war, broke every cease-fire they committed themselves to, cared little for the damage they underwent, and kept fighting to the end without respite. For them, their absolute commitment to wipe Israel out knows no compromise or concession, not even a negotiation directly with Israel, for negotiations are by nature a give-and-take process which should yield to a compromise and a settlement, and they have prohibited themselves from any of those concepts. Neither al-Qa'ida nor the Hamas, Hizbullah, or ISIS has shown appetite for such processes, hence their self-obligation to fight to the finish even when their

adversaries evince an overwhelming superiority over them. The capitulation of radical and fascist Germany and Japan at the end of World War II is not likely to repeat itself in the case of radical Islam which prefers death to surrender. At times it transpired that it was much more important for the radicals to take the risk of harming their enemies than safeguarding their own interest and security.

One of the offshoots of the Syrian civil war, which has been raging since 2011 and has cost some three hundred thousand casualties by the end of 2014, has been the growth there of such radical Muslim movements as *Jabhat al-Nusra* (the Front of Victory), a branch of al-Qa'ida, and other similar factions, all committed to bring down the godless Assad regime in Damascus and install a Muslim state in his stead. That domestic war has not only devastated Syria and caused hundreds of thousands of fatalities and millions of uprooted refugees, but also attracted young enthusiastic Muslim volunteers from Muslim countries as well as from Western countries which host large Muslim minorities. One of the consequences of that long and costly civil war has been the emergence of ISIS (lately dubbed as IS), based in chaotic and unruly northern Syria and in conflict-ridden, uncontrollable Iraq, under the leadership of a charismatic cleric Baghdadi, very similar to Mullah Omar of Qandahar, who aspires to create an expanding caliphate under his aegis. This caliphate is being fought by a coalition of Western countries headed by the Americans, who try to bring in Muslim countries into the loop so as to make the ISIS threat seem universal. Unlike Hamas and Hizbullah, whose menace is "only" against Israel, and therefore it could be almost ignored and the Israelis who resist it can be blamed of "disproportionality" fighting it, the ISIS threat is seen by Americans and their allies as directed against them and their interests; therefore they are bracing for a protracted and costly war where no "proportions" are being considered. Despite all this, and the odds against which ISIS is operating, it continues to attract volunteer *Mujahideen,* defy the Americans and their coalition, and inspire other areas of the Islamic world, like the Sinai and Libya, to follow their model.

Establishing an Islamic World Government has been incrusted in the DNA of Muslim radicals since its beginnings. Following the death of the Prophet in AD 632, the Muslim community in Medina was in disarray as to who should inherit him. It was clear to all that in his function as a Prophet and Messenger of Allah he was irreplaceable since he was the Seal of the

Prophets and the last of the Messengers of God. But to fill his other functions as the chief executive of the community, its supreme judge, its military commander, and its spiritual leader, a replacing vicar could be agreed by the *Shura* of his companions. Thus, four of them were designated in succession: Abu Bakr (632–34), Umar (634–44), Uthman (644–56), and Ali (656–61), as caliphs for the first thirty years consequent to his death, and later dubbed as *Rashidun* (the Rightful). But as soon as the first dynastic rule was established by the Umayyads (662–750), its ruling kings or emperors arrogated to themselves the title of caliph without always deserving it. That supreme title was taken up by the successive rulers of every major Islamic dynasty thereafter until the demise of the Ottomans following World War I. But especially after its decline, the caliphate has become the iconic system of government throughout the Islamic world, and every movement of revival of Islam, particularly the current one that radical Muslims have embraced, harks back to the caliphate as the ideal to be attained, so as to fill the yawning gap between the disunity and chaos of the present and the ideal government of past history and future utopia.

However, even when there was no caliphate, the tradition of authoritarian rule had already been well rooted in Arab and Muslim lore, which facilitated its revival when it was resorted to. From its inception, Islamic government had to learn from the great imperial experiments of its time: the Sassanids in Persia and the Byzantines in Anatolia, which combined empire and religion. The Prophet Muhammed, consciously or not, adopted this model in his ten years of rule in Medina (AD 622–32), for without his experience as a preacher in Mecca he would not have been invited to Medina, and without his ruling experience in Medina, it is doubtful whether his prophetic experience in Mecca would have served any practical purpose and accorded him his fame as the founder of Islam. The mold of government developed by Muhammed through his Medina experience while he was setting the first example of rule in the first Muslim *polis* consisted of five functions: prophecy and the legislative powers connected to it, spiritual leadership, executive power, judiciary, and the military.

Muhammed’s prophecy was his value-added quality over all humans, and when he moved from Mecca, where he was a “mere” apocalyptic soothsayer, who predicted the end of the world, and had not much to offer except to sermonize to the bourgeois merchant population of his clan in his

city, to Medina where he was an invited ruler, his career changed completely. Now he had to care for the city's affairs, to deal with personal, clan, tribal, and commercial issues which sought settlement before him. His prophecies continued, but this time tailor-made to respond to the arising problems he had to resolve in real life. Those revelations, as he and other Muslims came to see them, were being imprinted in the Holy Book as arising from his divine inspiration and served later as the precedents and the base for the Prophet's legislation. But when he died, and having no successor as a Prophet, it was clear that no caliph could legislate like the Prophet, that the Prophet and his *Sunna* already contained all necessary legislation for all humanity for all time, and that only *ulama* (doctors of the Holy Law) could henceforth tell what was the law, hence the important role the do ctors of Islam have in the Muslim state as interpreters of the law *faqih:* jurist), as religious verdict renderers *(mufti),* or as *quda'* (sing. *qadi:* judge). Theoretically, the caliphs could not legislate because they lacked the understanding of the scholars, but they could make other scholars who obeyed them pronounce the legal sanctions they wanted.

In Muhammed's time, legislation was narrowly related to prophecy because as the Prophet's revelations were laws, and were later included in the verses of the Qur'an, they became laws by definition. But after his death, who else could legislate who did not possess the power of prophecy? In theory, the jurists retained that right for themselves, of legislation via interpretation, but not any more via inspiration, since the gates of *Ijtihad* had been closed, and most certainly not via innovation (Allah forbid the *bid'a).* Except for periods of truly righteous and pious rulers, who would resort to the scholars of their time to determine right or wrong, most rulers could not resist the temptation of ruling daily on current matters and then asking their scholars to find rationalizations for their decisions. The Ottoman Empire already acted under the constraint of distinguishing between Shari'a law which prevailed in the realm, and the *Qanun* covered the temporal issues that arose from daily necessities, be they financial, social, administrative, or military. In our days, there is supposed to be a modern legal code that is partly based on the Islamic sources and partly on the civil code. But the body of laws in both systems is there to be violated by the rulers, who continue to play by the Islamic rules in public, but in private they do much what they like. Therefore, though no Arab dictator prior to the Islamic Spring of the 2010s would admit that he was the

legislator and would assert that he made sure that every item of legislation passed the Parliament, everybody knew that even the King of Jordan and the President of Egypt, who were among the mildest dictators, could suspend the Parliament at will; conversely, anything they wished the Parliament to pass was done without much foot-dragging. That meant, in fact, that the dictators were also the legislators. Concurrently, all those dictators made sure to lend lip service to religion, by declaring that the source of legislation was mainly or at least secondarily Islam.

As far as executive power was concerned, the Prophet was truly limitless, even though his Medina Treaty which he signed (metaphorically, since he was illiterate) prior to his arrival had stipulated certain conditions and obligations on him. In fact, after he islamized the city and subjugated it to his will, and as his lifestyle had become the model for all Muslims to emulate, no one could question his wisdom in his executive functions, especially as he was under the constant blessing of his divine revelations, thus he could not be contradicted or disobeyed. And so the Prophet, using his charisma and his leadership skills, could unite the Arab tribes, deal with the Jewish tribes quite harshly, expelling some of them, executing others, and islamizing still others; subjugate his rivals from within, launch military campaigns against other tribes, reform the inner structures of the city, launch the new religion, and much more, all in the space of ten years. Executive powers are the area where the present-day tyrants “excel” too: they make their own “constitution” upon ascending to power, thus taking over something from the legislative branch when there is one; they monopolize the appointments of all ministers and their prime ministers, hold the reins of power at all levels, decide upon the budget, the rate of taxation to be levied, and the persons and institutions who enjoy public budgeting; they determine what the people will eat and at what price, and hold in hand all the entrances and exits to and from public power. Is this a continuation of the old privileges that the Prophet had enjoyed or simply the place where all dictators are bound to slide? It does not matter, as long as there will always be people who find justification to their deeds in Muhammed’s exemplary life precedent.

The sociopolitical conditions of those days had indeed required that all those authorities be concentrated in the Prophet’s hands, regardless of whether he knew or not that his style was not different from the authoritarian rule that he saw or heard about in his environment. The only

model he was familiar with was the tribal one, where the *sheikh* concentrated all authority in his hands, thus he could not deviate much from what was known without producing controversy around him. Naturally, the *sheikh* was also committed to his tribe and its values and to the consensus among the notables to preserve his dominant rule; therefore he could not turn his rule into a heartless and unrestrained tyranny without incurring the risk of losing it. There was an unwritten social pact, worded in terms of the classical *muruwa,* which included ruling justly (the judiciary aspect), managing wisely and effectively (the executive part), and leading heroically in battle (the military aspect). They, in return, undertook to obey him and his orders and to follow his lead in all his endeavors. In other words, when the Messenger of Allah was asked to proceed to Medina and take over the rule there, it is reasonable to assume that he knew what was expected of him.

The authoritarian rule in Islam naturally followed the footsteps of the Prophet, who was, and still is, considered infallible and the most perfect of men, therefore he could commit no fault, in government or in anything else. It is also reasonable to assume that while establishing the fundaments of Muslim rule according to his needs, he also learned something from the imperial models he knew or learned about. Being possessors of an acute sense of obedience to his example, the Arabs as well as other Muslims have always felt that the great precedents set by him in his lifetime had necessarily grown to become valid for all times, especially after Muhammed died, and the Arabs sprang out of Arabia to conquer the world and were in need to find a Muslim style of government that would respond to their growing and pressing needs. One has to assume that they were convinced of divine assistance to their vast and exciting enterprise of conquest, which was done under their authoritarian regime of the time; therefore after the death of the Prophet they pursued the same route, which was common to them and to the enemies they fought against. Moreover, at a time when their Sassanid and Byzantine rivals were tyrannical rulers dipped in luxury and opulence, in addition to authoritarianism, to the point that one spoke of the legendary “Byzantine Court” and “Sassanid ostentation,” the Muslim court was managed much more simply and modestly, at least in the beginning of Islam, for the authority of the ruler was institutionalized in the *bay’ah* (oath of fealty), without a need to resort to all the paraphernalia which inspired awe, splendor, and authority in the rule and succession of

those ancient imperial houses. That meant the Muslim ruler in place, who had been designated by the *Shura*, as in the times of the Rightful Caliphs, or later inherited his mantle through dynastic inheritance, was recognized and accepted in the public square, as if the oath of allegiance to him were given personally by each Muslim, for any time of rebellion or dissatisfaction with the ruler, dubbed_/ztna, meant that the oath *(bay'ah)* lost its validity. Then, worshippers no longer mentioned the name of the ruler at Fridays' prayers, as if the weekly validation of the oath no longer held. Thus, the outside symbols of power were very much personal and direct and needed no elaboration or ostentation.

The charisma of the Prophet in his time was beyond doubt or question. Nobody challenged his sublime qualities and natural propensity to rule, as if he were a prince who inherited those qualities. But what about those who followed him as rulers? Did they inherit his charisma? How was the balance preserved between their nature as pious and righteous men and their ability to govern the people, for the people, and make their rule appear as just and beyond reproach as possible? Allah's Messenger, apart from serving in all the functions cited above, also created and enforced a systematic ritual, repeated daily and many times a day, which became one of the sources of his power and made him also the spiritual and religious leader of the Muslim community, in addition to being the Messenger of Allah and His last Prophet. The first pillar of the faith, the *Shahada* (bearing witness), repeated at the head of each prayer the formula that "there was no God but Allah and Muhammed His Prophet." When it became the first of the articles of the faith, this formula made inextricable the connection between Him and the very belief in the religion. When repeated many times over, every day, in prayer, and preceding each important act one does, this accorded a central place to the Prophet in one's life. As long as the Prophet lived, and his contemporaries felt privileged to be around him, they could see in front of them the perpetual expression of Allah's grace, in sending to them the Seal of the Prophets and the most perfect of men to serve them and to guide them. There was never a possibility that anyone could question that charisma. Even in moments of friction with his closest companions, like with Umar in Hudaibiya, Muhammed's unique and prevalent quality remained, because he always had the last word.

When the Prophet suddenly died in AD 632, there was an urgent need to appoint a successor, lest his entire heritage disintegrate. The *Shura* elected

Abu Bakr, probably by order or seniority since he was the oldest, but also the Prophet's father-in-law. What to make of his attribute of *Siddiq* (the Righteous)? Probably not much, because it was accorded to him after his death. After him came the three others (Umar, Uthman, Ali), every time following huge controversies and forceful lobbying for each candidate, which ended with compromises, horse-trading, bargaining, threats, and pressures. The main issue was to designate a successor, lest the charisma of the Prophet be discontinued, and the authority of the caliph be so diminished that there would not be much left to inherit. At the same time it was clear that prophecy was sealed for ever by Muhammed, and so were the divine legislative powers that emanated from it. Therefore, all that could be passed on to the caliphs were the remaining functions of the Muslim ruler: civil legislation, executive, judiciary, spiritual, and military command. This combination of so many top functions made sure that the caliph would be no less omnipotent than the Prophet in the practical domain of rule, while the special and unique level of prophecy would remain sealed and out of bounds, hence the attribute of *Khalifa* (caliph) imputed to him, meaning a human figure, as even the Prophet had insisted upon characterizing himself, who served as a replacement, or vicar in Christian parlance for the replacement of Jesus on earth. But there the vicars became infallible popes to a divine figure, while the caliphs remained human all the way, with righteous qualities to be sure, but nothing divine, otherwise the doctrine of the unity of Allah *(tawhid)* would be seriously compromised.

After the Four Righteous, many Islamic dynasties followed, often simultaneously, and struggling against each other, and sometimes the sons of the same ruler fighting for the succession of their father, like the bloody struggles between Aurangzeb and his brothers for the succession of Shah Jahan who, in imprisonment, was helplessly watching his sons butchering each other. This war to the finish proceeded with every generation, for a new king could not feel safe on his throne, as an absolute ruler, unless all his rival contenders were eliminated. In the Arab monarchies today, there are families on the throne which try to ensure an orderly succession, and there is no telling when some outsider down the line might rebel and reverse the order, as had happened with the Nasser and Qaddafi antimonarchical revolutions in North Africa. There are certainly various degrees of absolutism, like the one perceivable in Saudi Arabia, without any institutions to palliate the royal house, and where even the *Shura* is

appointed by the monarch, and in Kuwait and Jordan which have some kind of parliament. Some kingdoms, like Jordan and Morocco, boast their "constitutional monarchy," but either they do understand the difference between their kingdoms and those of Benelux, the Scandinavians, and England, and they continue nonetheless their fraudulent pursuit, or they don't and just play with words. But absolutism in these countries is not confined to monarchies, for in Saddam's Iraq, Assad's Syria, and Qaddafi's Libya, there was also an extreme sort of absolutism, which even surpassed monarchies in cruelty and egotism of the rulers. Some of them were/are so full of themselves that they designated heirs among their sons to succeed them (Saddam for Iraq, Mubarak for Egypt, Ali for Yemen, Qaddafi for Libya, Assad for Syria, where Bashar had actually inherited from his father in 2000).

More moderate and human, and less cruel and absolutistic authoritarianism was offered by Ben Ali of Tunisia and Mubarak of Egypt, and it was paradoxically they who fell first at the beginning of the Spring, but their lives were preserved or they escaped to a protective exile. It seems that the more cruel among them, who were also ruthless in defense of their rule, like Assad, Qaddafi, and Ali of Yemen, had to fight the longest and kill the most of their own citizens, to remain in place, or before they lost their lives. Islamic history had known both types of tyrants: those who ran away and others who were killed during the war of succession. But even the more benevolent types, like Mubarak, when too long in power (thirty years) tended toward corruption and "monarchic" rule. In effect, Mubarak was "elected" and "reelected" every time anew, by an obedient parliament, with no rival candidate allowed to run, lest he "caused division among the people." Lately, when the old and tired Mubarak announced that his son would run for office after him, his people rebelled, because when they agreed to a republic in 1952, they did not mean a monarchical or dynastic republic. In Lebanon too, despite the full blown election campaign, Saad Hariri ran to replace his father who was murdered by Hizbullah on behalf of the Syrians. Similarly, to replace the legendary Pierre Jumayyil, the founder and commander of the Phalanges, his two sons followed: Bashir first, and when he was slain by the Syrians, his brother Amin followed to the presidency. Kamal Jumblatt, the Druze leader, was replaced by his son Walid who is far from reaching his stature and has even shown subservience

to Bashar Assad, wrongly betting on the leader of Syria who began to stagger to his disappearance during the Syrian civil war.

As far as the judiciary is concerned, judges, who were all religious *(qadi)* in old days, served under the various caliphs and dynasties, but since they depended on the royal court for their appointment to the job, they were also usually obedient, though they were supposed to enforce *Shari'a* law. But since the Ottoman rule, which had established the distinction between *Shari'a* and civil law *(Qanun)*, all independent Muslim countries then gradually adopted such a system, and pressures began as to the degree and extent to which the law of each country ought to depend entirely, to a large degree, or partially on religious law. In any case the two systems exist side by side and both are apportioned their share by the administration in place. But under dictators the system does not matter and things are usually decided according to the whims of the rulers, when the issue is important to him to the point that he cares to intervene. We have mentioned earlier that the first legal document that every ruler in the Muslim world has introduced was a constitution, which, instead of being left to the public or to assemblies of representatives to put together, is made by the tyrant or his underlings. Rather than constituting a legal framework which sets limits to the dictator's power and promises protection to the citizens and their rights, this sort of "constitution" only draws the guidelines for the future action of the ruler, not necessarily to be respected, but to be altered by a new document of the same sort when the ruler changes his mind or when the next dictator comes.

And finally comes the military field, the one that had been fulfilled with distinction by the Prophet, as he launched periodical wars of expansion in Arabia, or raids *(ghazwa)* against his rival tribes or across the Byzantine border, or to seize the holy shrine of Mecca to which he had not been allowed to enter by his fellow tribesmen of Qureish. Through his campaigns throughout Arabia where his Medinan followers never hesitated to tread, he ensured for himself the title of *Amir-al-Mu'minin* (Commander of the Faithful), a title he seemed to like in particular due to the frequency of its usage, when he was addressed by other Muslims. This was also the title favored by all the caliphs and Sultans who followed throughout the generations. There were even cases of Muslim minority rebellions, where the local commanders who wished to rally larger Muslim troops around them made their summons to their public using this title or similar to it.[7] In

the modern Arab and Islamic worlds, most dictators also put themselves at the head of the high military command in their country, either because they mounted a *coup* as military men or because they wish to appear as generals or marshals or admirals in their military uniform (Sadat was killed in a general's suit while watching a military parade; Idi Amin dressed like a marshal; Qaddafi liked to parade with either his officer's suit or his clown outfit). In that fashion, they seem to send a clear message that whatever their generals' ranks, those they wear are superior. For all these dictatorships, the army has been their main sustenance in power, and it is worth recalling that in Egypt, when the army abandoned Mubarak, he collapsed; in Syria Bashar's army supported him, so he could fight for a long time while the outside world thought he was faltering and pressed him to abdicate his rule.

Even though dust is far from settling yet on all those countries which underwent the Spring (except perhaps Tunisia), it is clear that what was will never be again and that new and uncertain paths are being carved into the rock, whose directions we cannot yet ascertain. It is also clear that the masses of Arabs and Muslims are loath to sustain the tyrannical rule that has ruled them hitherto. Yes, they all shout "Democracy!" as if they knew what it was, but what they mean is that they are tired of dynastic and absolute rulers. On the other hand, it is not easy to imagine in the Islamic world powerless "vegetarian" monarchical regimes like those in Europe, because for them a ruler is a ruler, a king is a king, and an executive without authority is nobody. Thus, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan, or the Gulf States, which are proclaiming their wish to adopt reform, for example, by instituting "constitutional monarchies" into their respective systems, will have ultimately to go, because neither can they relinquish their power totally, without which there is no constitutional monarchy, nor would their nations which they had enslaved for many decades, let them continue their rule unchecked, for then the monarch instead of becoming merely the symbol of the state would remain the main power broker in it, which is a recipe for more friction and future crises.

The most amazing aspect of this is the fact that after years of intimate knowledge of the heads of states of the Spring, and of business dealings with them and official representations in each other's country for years, during which they had the chance to examine the regime, gauge its feudalistic and dictatorial dimensions, and evaluate the degree of

oppression, suppression, corruption, and exploitation which sustained it, Western powers, including their politicians, diplomats, military, intelligence, and scholars, hardly ever voiced one word of alarm, of warning, and of fear from things to come. They allowed things to deteriorate to their maximum, and only when open rebellion broke out and blood started to spill on the streets, have they had the decency to say: “Oh yah, we knew all along, but were ordered not to speak up” or “we knew it was coming” or else “we could have never believed this rule would be so easy to remove.” We could even expect someone to cry out: “remember the Shah’s island of stability, that Carter had turned into a swamp of Iranian hostility.” Where were all those presidents and foreign ministers in the West who invited those dictators to their capitals, sold them weapons, defended them in the United Nations, formed alliances with them, pardoned their violations of every law, forgave their crimes, and allowed them to plant their tents (literally) in the hearts of Rome, Paris, and London? Didn’t they know they were tyrants and corrupt? If they did not know, they should have dismissed their ambassadors and their chiefs of intelligence there who submitted to them false and biased reports. Their late reaction would expose them now to two sorts of accusations that they would find difficult to refute: that they now admit their faltering policies in the previous years, for lending support to all sorts of corrupt and dangerous dictators and enabled them to survive for decades, knowing that they were robbing and exploiting their peoples; and second, if that is, or was, the case, why expect the countries of the Spring to have confidence in the Western powers which have disappointed and betrayed them with their conduct in the past?

Many secondary questions pop up in the public squares of all those countries which have chosen to change course, all leading to the main question of trusting once again the powers which have misled them more than once before. For example, America and the West now promise to support democracy. What democracy? How can we be sure we are talking about the same democracy? For years they had let Mubarak (and the others) rig elections, so how can they be trusted to ensure fair elections now? They had let Saudi Arabia and Libya to do without elections at all, and they were never heard urging those rulers to change course. What has happened now? Did Westerners suddenly mend their ways? Why did they let Egypt suppress the Copts for decades, the Syrians to impose a regime of terror and to interfere in their neighbor’s affairs, and Hizbullah to take over the rule in

Lebanon, in submission to the Syrian and Iranian tyrannies? And when the West intervened in oil-rich Libya, dropping bombs without taking any risks for their troops, everyone expected to see the same unfolding in Syria. But NATO members knew the difference, because the Syrian army was and still is large, larger than the number of divisions NATO could field (except for the Americans) and its air force and air defenses are formidable enough to challenge Western air power, save the American, while the Libyan military did not exist as a fighting force. No major European power could stand the domestic disaster of bringing home plastic bags with corpses, therefore no country volunteered to fight there. America, which could have done it, had its hands full in Afghanistan, and an election campaign approaching, and it was clear that it would not take any additional risk. Even though America has later taken the lead of the Arabo-Western coalition to battle ISIS, it has limited its intervention to air strikes and to training Iraqi troops, in an attempt to avoid a recurrence of the costly Iraqi and Afghani ventures.

The faults that the awakening Arab participants of the Spring could detect and complain about against the West were not only on the military level, but on the diplomatic front as well. When America stated one year into the Syrian crisis that Assad had "lost his legitimacy," it simply revealed in public what it refused to recognize openly before, that Assad had never had any legitimacy for power, exactly as the other dictators. His father, who took over the rule by a *coup* and then bequeathed it to his son, had never been elected by anyone either. Bashar Assad's role in power has been sustained by Iran and by Hizbullah, externally, and the army domestically, themselves outlaws who have never got legitimacy from anyone to rule or to sustain dictators. Obama's administration had stated its policy of engagement which failed dismally. Before him, the Bush administration had successfully isolated Syria, cut off relations with it, put it under political siege, forced it to evacuate its forces from Lebanon, all this to punish it for the *al-Qa'ida* forces who had been allowed to infiltrate Iraq and cause damage to the American forces there. Came Obama with his new policy; he went to Riyadh to prostrate before the King of that primitive and obscurantist country, a notoriously corrupt and human right denier, and then proceeded to Cairo where he made an incredibly hypocritical and sycophantic speech to the Muslim world, which produced no positive result, apart from the Spring of 2011 which Obama did not want in the first place. Then he enlisted Turkey to also sponsor Syria back into the fold, by

granting it back its place among nations and by reestablishing diplomatic relations with it. Assad and others came to believe that America needed them more than they needed it and felt free to act at will on their domestic front.

Within one year, Mubarak was urged by Obama to go, since he no longer represented the Muslim world or the much solicited stability. Assad was again boycotted; his legitimacy had gone and as he engaged in more killings of his own citizens, suddenly America discovered that he had formidable allies in Moscow and Beijing, even more so in Tehran and in Beirut, and that his allies would not let him fall, exactly as America and Turkey had tried to boost him one year earlier. Who could take seriously that zigzagging policy? Least of all the countries of the Spring themselves, who looked at pathetic Obama one week supporting Mubarak, the next negotiating with his sworn enemies of the Muslim Brothers; one week America boycotting and besieging Assad, then giving him long leashes with Turkish enthusiastic support, then banning him again and acting for his fall. Do they know whom they would support instead? Of course not, and they call that "foreign policy," as if it were all measured, calculated, and considered. They regularly publish the State Department report about human rights violations, where the most liberal and human rights guardian in the region, Israel, is censured, but Saudi Arabia, the most grievous violator of those rights, is kept hidden behind the scenes. One wonders what is going on. In Bahrain, an uprising of the Shi'ite majority was quelled militarily, with several casualties, but no word of delegitimation, censure, condemnation, or blame came out of the State Department. The United States has a strong naval base there.

We have seen several elements of authoritarian rule in Islamic tradition, which have all found expression during the turbulence in the Islamic world: for example, the tradition of the *Sheikh,* which generated the caliphate and the dictatorships which are still extant in our days; and by contrast, the other tendencies which palliate that harsh aspect, like the *Ijma'* (consensus in religious practice), the *Shura* (principle of the Council with notables participating), the lack of hierarchy in the clerical system, the mythical equality between all, on the floor of the mosque, from the King to the last worshipper. We are suggesting here a contradiction, as it were, between principles that look proto-democratic, down to earth and popular, and harsh autocratic principles of government. There is a tradition in Islam that the

Prophet and the first caliphs were simple, accessible, and wary from elevating themselves over the masses, versus the later kings, emperors, and sultans, who hid in their palaces and could hardly be seen by the public. Partly that stemmed from the size of the growing empire and its bureaucracy, where it had to grow impersonal for the state to fill its pressing needs. But partly it was also due to the changing interpretations of things. For example, coffee was considered in the beginning of Islam as a drug or equivalent to alcohol or narcotics, and there were people who were arrested for using it. But popular custom was stronger, and at last coffee not only was permitted but became an essential tool of socialization. But one has also to pay attention to the fact that while *Ijma'* did gather momentum as a social and religious consensus, it was no longer possible to implement it in practice when the *umma* grew beyond the city *-polis* of Medina, to extend over large parts of the medieval world and then over the entire universe. It was then necessary to confine the validity of the consensus to the scholars of each community only, since it was impossible that a consensus between all world Muslims be attained, especially under the transport and communications conditions of the time. But that too was too vast for a practical consensus, and in time it became imperative to consult only the main scholars of each generation, and even that became increasingly impractical.

Of course, there was neither democracy nor anything resembling it in that vast and varied Islamic world. But this was the closest one could come to some kind of representative body. Moreover, unlike the *Shura* and other councils of appointed notables, the consensus of scholars was and still is meritocratic in essence, because it is self-selected, just like the Ayatollahs in the Shi'ite system, and elitistic due to the participation of a select few. There is another limitation here, which is that supposing a consensus requires at least a majority, if not the totality of the main scholars, then the minority does not even have the right to express its minority view, let alone implement it under the inundating sweep of the majority. In other words, to seek democracy in this society is equivalent to sending a blind person to a dark room to look for a black cat which is not there.

In the West, legitimacy is achieved by freely electing a parliament and a government at the end of each term specified by law and when power is smoothly transferred from the incumbent to the elect. In the Islamic world there is no democracy of the Western type, though in Saudi Arabia one

could hear arguments in favor of the *Shura*, which is appointed by the monarch, as the "mother of all democracies." So, in what way would those who seize power justify or rationalize it? Except for the Prophet himself who ruled by the grace of Allah, who had dispatched him as His Messenger, all his successors had to prove their legitimacy one way or another. One way to gain legitimacy today is to follow the spirit of our time and hold "elections," whose results are preprogrammed and whose unfolding is choreographed in such a style as not to expose the rigging. In the communist world, there were also elections but with candidates from a single party, namely the ruling party, and they were "elected" without opposition, a pattern that has been generously and uncritically copied by most Islamic countries if and when elections were held at all. In Iran, there is a Supreme Screening Commission which decides whom to permit to run for elections and whom to ban. In that system, there is a permanent Supreme Spiritual Leader, who does not run or stand for election, just like a privileged monarch. He supervises from above and nothing can be done without his agreement. The entire bureaucracy, from the president down, is supposed to be "guided" by him, due to his aura of "sanctity," deservedly inaugurated by Khomeini, but allowed to continue even though no one was found so far to fill that position convincingly.

In monarchic systems, kings and princes are not elected, and when they don their crowns they act as authoritarian, and sometimes as absolute as the other sorts of dictators. They preserve their clan's laws of succession, going first through the collateral members of the family, brother by brother, and only when they are all exhausted, usually in their eighties, does that generation skip one or two generations forward to start a new count of kings, heirs, and princes, the others becoming ministers, governors, military commanders, court councilors, ambassadors, and senior officials. In that system, proximity to the king and loyalty to him, rather than skill or proficiency for the job are the main criteria for senior appointments. In other systems, like Qaddafi's, Saddam's, and Assad's, there was even no pretense of election or legitimacy; they simply took over and ruled, with the help of a military clique which supported them, in return for benefits that accrued to them after the success of the *coup*. After they take over power, they organize "elections," to signal to the world that the Arab Middle East is no different from the American Middle West, and very often misinformed and naïve Western correspondents report about those "elections" with

enthusiasm and statistics as if the data were credible, ironclad, and authoritative. This grotesque farce continued for years and decades and the West kept its silence, pretending it did not know and did not hear. The Islamic regimes also pretended that all was well, since very rarely did any Western country protest against any disorder in the "elections" or in the transition from fake elections to rigged power. Quite the contrary—every president who was thus "elected" was inundated from Western capitals by a cascade of greetings upon his "election."

Even before the coming of the Spring, the autocrats in place started feeling the push from the bottom, through Internet and social networks, to open up and democratize, something which compelled them to devise new rationalizations to their illegitimate rule, because they realized that their previous pseudo-democratic measures had encountered only contempt and anger in the street. So, they at first reverted to their old, irrelevant, and rusty pretexts. The president of Egypt boasted the "strongest military force in the area" which would stand fast in defense of all Arabs; the Syrians were proud of their resolute Arab nationalism and their unconditional support for the Palestinians; the King of Morocco invoked his descent from the Prophet, and so did the King of Jordan who also added to his arrows the title of "the Curator of Al-Aqsa" which he obtained from his peace deal with Israel; and Saudi Arabia, as the curator of the Two Mosques, of Mecca and Medina, the holiest in Islam. They thought that if they all were so wonderful, idealistic, and caring only for their countries and peoples, who would want to replace them? But, in fact, they were all illegitimate, because no one chose them; they took power either by royal inheritance, or through succession of revolutionary leaders (Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak), and if not for the Spring which discontinued that apostolic chain, successions would have gone on to the sons or to the underlings of the leaders in place *ad infinitum.*

In World War II, G. Ferrero wrote his book *On Democracy,* which since became a classic, where he coined the idea of "fraudulent democracy" to describe the fascist regimes in Europe (Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, and some of their short-lived supporters in the Arab world like Rashid Ali in Iraq, the Brothers in Egypt, and Haj Amin in Palestine), part of whom had experienced something of the democratic system, but ended up borrowing its rules in order to distort its substance. For example, "elections" were held technically, but only to leave the arena open to the autocrat, and to him alone. In the Arab and Islamic world, which had almost never experienced

democracy (even in Turkey, the classic border case, the elected governments were removed by the army on several occasions), one can suspect that not a fraud was there, but an act of ignorance of the essence of democracy. Indeed, how could they know what it meant if they had never experienced it? If the UN wants to extend assistance to a new country to organize elections, it should not dispatch as its messengers the delegates of Syria, Sudan, or Iran, but those of Sweden, Britain, and Luxemburg, who know and have experienced something of it. In any case, “democracy” has become even prior to the Spring, a mantra repeated by every leader as if it were part of his platform, his belief, or his understanding. In fact, it was meaningless, not only because those autocrats did not mean it, but also because they did not comprehend it.

Mubarak’s party was called “National Democratic,” which like the popular democracies in eastern Europe, namely Bulgaria, Rumania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and so on, purposely added to their names the appellation “democratic,” knowing full well that they were not. Britain, France, or Sweden never needed to underline that they were democracies, because everyone knew it. China, similarly, boasts its “popular” attribute, intending to distance its image from the autocracy that it is in fact. The bottom line is that where there is a democracy, autocrats cannot rise, and vice versa: where there is an autocrat there can be no democracy. When Ariel Sharon headed the Israeli government in the 2000s, President Mubarak was interviewed by the international press and he stressed, that unlike “Sharon the dictator,” he himself was a “real democrat,” voted in by 90 percent of the Parliament. It was clear that Mubarak never understood how democracy worked, nor the very stringent rules and controls over Israeli elections, so that there should be no doubt or question over their results. What he said indicated more his ignorance than any flaw with the free and democratic elections in Israel that are supervised by an impeccable Supreme Court Judge. Or take Bashar Assad. He inherited from his father in 2000, following a speedy process of amending the constitution (as if it mattered) to make the young age of the successor (thirty-four) eligible for the presidency. But the members of the parliament and the public at large who were interviewed after the amendment, all pointed to the “democratic process” which regulated the succession. No one dared to raise the issue of an inexperienced son inheriting the mantle of his murderous father, proving once again a case of a

very simple-minded self-delusion rather than a sophisticated fraud or an effective system of succession of the rule.

We have already mentioned the fleeting constitutions, introduced by every new tyrant as a way to lay his future plans before his constituency, which he did not consult when he seized power. He and everyone else knew that he would not be restrained by those rules and that he would pursue his autocracy with or without constitution. But lacking any other legitimacy for power, he feels that his proclaimed goal serves as some kind of justifier, and he would throughout his tenure hold on to it and show it as his achievement even if there is no real substance to it. That "constitution" was aimed at replacing the previous one which had been written and promised by the previous ruler, full of rosy wordings and sublime pledges, which, when the day comes and the autocrat is removed, would be replaced by another paper of that sort and of similar value. A plurality of constitutions, one succeeding the other, means that there is no one binding constitution. Only now, in view of the changing realities under the Spring, where public commissions were established to assemble, discuss, and formulate new constitutions, is there any new public awareness of the vanity of previous ones and is there a chance that the new versions would be more open, liberal, and reflective of the public mood and not necessarily of the ruler's whims. Two more obstacles stand in the way of removing tyrants: to return the armies to their barracks as has been done by Erdogan in Turkey and Mursi in Egypt; and searching for some working compromises between the fundamentalist Muslim governments, who are getting the majority but are almost totally shorn of any governing experience, and those parts of the civil population which fear them, lest the entire infrastructure erected by the tyrants in the past decades come to total paralysis.

It would seem unrealistic today that, after the splits of the Islamic world into fifty-seven separate countries, languages, and ethnic groups, and in view of the prevailing personal, regional, and national jealousies among them, they could all possibly unite under one rule. But it is a fact that the ideal persists, in any case among the fundamentalists who aspire to *Shari'a* law in their countries. But among these groups which champion the caliphate, there are different orders of priority and different paces of execution. The Brothers, and now ISIS, including the Hamas, advocate the takeover of government in their countries and the enforcement of *Shari'a* there, as they did in Gaza, before other countries, and as the militants of

ISIS are doing in their Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. In Egypt, the Brothers tried to achieve the same goal by peaceful means, but they were in power merely one year (2012–13) before they were removed from the scene by a military coup. In neither case did those in power begin any practical process of forming a caliphate. Salafis, like the Talibans, profess the creation of a caliphate first that would by definition be mighty and comprehensive enough to impose *Shari'a* on all Muslims. The Brothers in Egypt have embraced a cautious and gradual method of introducing the Holy Law to all citizenry, lest a sudden and all-encompassing islamization in one stroke might deter and frighten hesitant and uncertain souls who had been, to their minds, corrupted by modernization, secularization, and westernization. But there were also aggressive currents like the Taliban when they held the helm of power in Afghanistan in the 1990s, the Gama'at in Egypt before they were wiped out by Mubarak, or the Armed Groups in Algeria, who fought and killed their countrymen mercilessly in order to impose their way. Only now, in the post-Spring era, after the failure of the Egyptian and Tunisian examples to impose and maintain power, and the trauma caused in much of the Islamic world by the horrors committed by ISIS, will any new attempts to islamize societies have to rely on much more circumspect, gentle, and slow piecemeal measures. Where there is no decision yet, like in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, it is early to know who will rise and who will fall, and for how long. One can imagine, however, that everywhere a settlement is agreed upon, the emerging ruler will have to explain where his legitimacy comes from. In Egypt and Tunisia we saw a genuine effort to conduct a fair election campaign, to keep restraint, and to distance the military from the election process. These are signs of legitimization of government. But came the new wave of ISIS, and Jabhat al-Nusra in Iraq and Syria, and once again islamization by force and terror is their agenda.

Conversely, in places where the struggle is going on, there is no telling how it might be decided. But one thing is certain: the previous illegitimate rulers will not be back, that is, there is a necessity and urgency to replace them by others who can inspire legitimacy. But who are they? What do they stand for? Who can guarantee their behavior as long as the democratic game is not digested well enough to become an organic part of the local politics? And what is legitimacy after all? It can follow the Ferrero model of democracy or the caliphate precedent as the fundamentalists would have

it. Democracy has never been tried to its full in the Islamic world, and we are hardly watching its first steps and holding our breath for them to succeed. It is true that most current Spring movements in the Islamic world have advocated slogans of democracy, but it is not at all clear if any of them knows what it is about, for none of them had ever experienced democracy Western style. Democracy is not only elections, because beyond a given method of electing the leadership, it also means a state of mind that lets the media act freely; respects the majority but protects the minority; does not pursue investigative journalists who publicize the corruption of the system, like the case in Pakistan and Turkey today; respects human rights; gives top adjudicating power to an independent judiciary; does not arbitrarily arrest its citizens, accusing them of "plots against the government"; refrains from incitement against its citizens and neighbors; advocates an open and liberal mode of government; and pursues a policy of good neighborliness with its neighbors. Where was there ever a paradise like this in the Islamic world? And where could such a regime materialize after so many years of oppression, corruption, and travesty of justice? For a regime to be able to operate on such a standard, it has first to be legitimate. It is obvious that the Spring broke out precisely in countries where the young people have had enough of tyrannical rule for decades, with no chance of change, for the rule of the fathers was to be taken up by their sons. Namely, the hopelessness of change was what pushed the young people to rebel. The demonstrators shouted: "Freedom!! Democracy!! Expel the tyrant!!" But we do not know what they meant, nor did they indicate what ought to be done in order to alter the situation. In most places we saw the same hypocrites and servile aides of the previous rulers, who had served them obediently for years, suddenly turn over to the rebels. So people are suspicious and confused, not knowing whom to trust, convinced that whoever steals for you today will steal from you tomorrow.

At the height of the crisis, the only alternative to the crumbling rulers has seemed to be the Islamic state that the Muslim Brothers had consistently preached since their inception. They are on record as opposing democracy, for being a human-made system that cannot compete with divinely inspired *Shari'a.* Thus, the latter, despite its problems and anachronism, and the caliphate after a millennium and a half of experiments which never lasted indefinitely, still looks to the believers as the most trusted, known, and promising avenue. In other words, that was the only system that could still

lend legitimacy to the rulers, being based on Islamic tradition. For that reason, each time an existing system threatened to crumble, the caliphate alternative loomed in the horizon as the only acceptable alternative. But when we begin comparing it with democracy, we immediately realize that not only are they incompatible, but they contradict each other in some very fundamental respects. Some believe that fundamentalist movements which negate democracy totally would have stepped immediately into a *Shari'a* caliphate-like state, as did the Taliban during their short stint in power (1996–2001) in Afghanistan and as the Islamic State is trying to do in Iraq and Syria. But the masses in the world of Islam have become so open to world media, to television, to the customs and standards of living in the West, to Internet and the social networks, and to the benefits of liberal democracy and human rights that they cannot be easily deprived from all that after decades of exposure. They are no longer prepared to accept oppression as a divine calamity; therefore the idea of a caliphate, which would be another kind of oppression from their point of view, would not be readily accepted without question.

Therefore, relatively pragmatic Islamic movements, like those in Tunisia and those which ruled Egypt in 2012–13, were compelled to pretend to behave democratically, till the time the public became accustomed to their style of rule, before they begin imposing restrictions and gradually trapping their public into the incontrovertibility of *Shari'a* law, which no individual in an Islamic society can resist without incurring the wrath of his environment. This method has already been dubbed "one man, one vote, one time," meaning that following the one voluntary vote which has lent legitimacy to their rule, such fundamentalists would need no more foreign legitimacy to rule, because they would be applying *Shari'a.* For this reason, the early experiments we have witnessed in Egypt and Tunisia, as the test cases of the Islamic Spring, were decisive for the fate of the entire Spring. For if these tests had succeeded in operating a modern and efficient Muslim society, which enjoyed freedom, without the harassments that accompany puritanical Muslim societies, like restrictions on women and public morals police, but with fair elections to all levels of government and the like, then a newly reformed style of the moderate Muslim Brothers, which could have been more pragmatic and sensitive than what they have been preaching for almost a century since their foundation, could perhaps have produced a

fresh, softer, and feasible Islam, a sort of revolutionary reform, instead of the restorative reform that they have advocated since their beginnings.

Since all the ills, failures, and drawbacks of Islamdom are imputed, if not to Israel and the Jews or to the West, then to the corruption of contemporary Islamic society, due to both internal shortcomings and external "westoxication", it is imperative to revert to the times when Islam was at its height, Muslims were pious and jihad-propelled, and the caliphate was just, glorious, and feared by Europe. On the domestic front, it is essential to revive aggressive jihad, which has been neglected in recent generations, and reinstall Shari'a law, the Law of Allah, which alone guarantees the strength of Muslim society and is sure to produce devoted jihad fighters who will return Islam to its past glory. It is also necessary to turn the present Muslim society, which has been infected with foreign ideas, back into Islam by enforcing Shari'a law, as the Taliban had done in Afghanistan until crushed by America, and if it is impossible under the present tyrants to achieve that goal, then the radicals ought to follow the example of the Prophet, who had migrated *(Hijra)* from the pagan society *(Jahiliyya)* of his native Mecca to Medina in AD 622, in order to launch his jihad for the conquest of Arabia and the world. So, if they cannot find a base for their struggle as Bin Laden had done in Sudan and then Afghanistan, then it is necessary to create a base *(Qa'ida)* by carving swaths of territory in Islamic land, as the ISIS and the jihadi fighters are doing in Syria, where they can start to enforce the Law of Allah.

However, as these experiments did not succeed, and one is entitled to suspect whether the eternal values of Islam will prevail, with their conservative and fundamentalist leanings, as in the days of Ibn Taymiya in Egypt and Syria or the Wahhabis in Arabia, or the days of Banna and Qutb in Egypt, and the clerics once again regard themselves as the watchdogs of the integrity of their faith in the face of the Western cultural and civilizational onslaught, then major confrontations are to be expected between the two styles of life, where not necessarily the stronger, but the more doggedly committed to his version of Islam in the world wins, as has already been evident in many arenas of the Spring today, especially in Syria and Iraq. The days of the Islamic Spring have shown that even in Islamic societies which had taken large strides toward civil government, like Turkey and Tunisia, it was still possible to arrest the process with the help of the backward societies of the conservative and illiterate countryside in both

places, while the urban bourgeoisie was watching with horror, but helplessly, its great modernizing achievements rolled back toward their abrogation. What model of Islam will these countries choose when the dust settles? Only time will tell.

The Islamic world has been a world apart in terms of modern Western thought. For instance, democracy is not a system they aspire to, because it runs counter to the more or less authoritarian regimes they are accustomed to; when they demand justice, they mean Islamic justice which is not exactly ours; tolerance to them is not unconditional acceptance of the other as is; terrorism is what others do to Islam, not the other way round; pluralism is altogether unheard of; ending a conflict can only be done via victory, not a compromise; sovereignty belongs to Allah, not to the people; legislation is not the prerogative of humans but of the Divine Will, of which they are the latest and most updated representatives and interpreters; Western values amount to corruption and blasphemy; logic and reason must follow the Muslim ways of thinking; they expect and demand respect for Islam but easily dispense of respect to other faiths; they regard their own shouting and abuse as a show of force, and their foes' dignified quiet and restraint as evidence of weakness; everybody owes them everything, but they owe no one anything; they view their attacks on others as lawful and legitimate, but any act of self-defense by non-Muslims is nothing but aggression. These ideas have again gained the upper hand in the public square of most Islamic countries, because most existing regimes are illegitimate, and Islam seems as the only viable alternative that is able and willing to contend for predominance and power.

Almost since its inception, Islam has recognized the division of humanity into three categories: the Muslims, the People of the Book (initially Jews and Christians and then extended to include others), and the pagans who knew no god. The lands of the globe were similarly divided into two domains: *dar-al-Islam* (the Abode of Islam) and *dar-al-Harb* (the Abode of war). While for practical purposes these categories are no longer operative because they would otherwise throw international relations into chaos, in the circles of Muslim radicals, both those in power and those in opposition to the rulers in place, this terminology has been revived and widely used to analyze internal and external affairs in accordance with the requisites of the *Shari'a*, namely the Holy Law of Islam. But one has to realize that the religion of the radicals is one and the same as classical

Islam, and its vocabulary and symbolism are identical. Therefore, when their statements or deeds are apologetically condemned by other Muslims as "non-Islamic," this is merely a blanket statement calculated to skirt the embarrassment caused by the excesses of their coreligionists. Since *Shari'a* submits to eternal and divine laws, it cannot be abrogated or amended at the whim of anyone. It is either applied more or less strictly, as do the radicals, or is partly or wholly ignored by many Muslims who have elected modernity over medieval outdated concepts and practices. The difference is then only in the degree of enforcement, for they are all aware and caring about the tenets of their faith, but may be lax about the implementation of some of them, even as they insist their Muslim identity and commitment. The radicals just display their burning passion for full implementation, here and now and at almost any cost.[8]

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a Muslim radical sheikh in exile from his native Egypt and now living in Qatar, regularly appears on *AlJazeera* network to expound his ideas and deliver *fatwas* (new decrees which for his followers become law). He is also the president of the European Fatwa Council, namely the recognized authority of all European Muslims, to ponder on their problems, religious or otherwise, and deliver verdicts that are seen by many as authoritative and enforceable. In one of his pronouncements, he recommended to his followers to "continue to battle the Jews. They will try to defend themselves, but you will get them ultimately. For the Jews will hide behind trees and rocks, which will announce out loud: 'a Jew is hiding behind me, come and kill him.' This will be the prerequisite for the coming of the Day of Resurrection."[9] This commandment is an oft-repeated tradition of the Prophet (a *hadith),* recurring *ad nauseam* in Islamic writings and cited in full in the Charter of the Hamas. But hardly anyone wonders how it is that the followers of the Prophet, who feel insulted every step of the way for whatever is said of him or against him and are even ready to indulge in violence in retribution to any insult of his honor, are not incensed by this *hadith's* appeal to wanton and indiscriminate murder of the followers of another faith, by those who claim to represent a "religion of peace and tolerance." Sheikh Qaradawi has made some stunning statements not only about politics but also about social issues that hardly qualify him or his followers as moderate. He said, for example, that

> [John] Kerry who ran against Bush in the 2004 elections, was supported by homosexuals and nudists. But it was Bush who won, because he is Christian, right wing, tenacious and unyielding. In other words, the religious overcame the pervert. So we cannot blame all Americans and westerners. But unfortunately, because the westerners . . . want to flatter these people on account of the elections, disaster strikes. In order to succeed and win the elections, he flatters these people, rather than saying to them: "No you are sinning against yourselves, against society, and against humanity. This is forbidden." . . . Lesbians and homosexuals should be punished the same punishment as any sexual pervert, the same as any fornicator. The schools of thought disagree about the punishment. Some say they should be punished like fornicators, and then we distinguish between married and unmarried men, and between married and unmarried women. Some say both should be punished the same way. Some say we should throw them from a high place, like God did to the people of Sodom. Some say we should burn them, and so on. There is disagreement. The important thing is to treat this act as a crime. . . . Lesbianism is not as bad as homosexuality, in practical terms.[10]

If these are the envisaged punishments to be meted out to Muslim sinners, how much more so for unbelievers who were deemed as sinning toward Muslims! One of the most respected Deobandi scholars believes that aggressive military jihad should be waged by Muslims "to establish the supremacy of Islam" worldwide. Justice Muhammad Taqi Usmani argues that Muslims should live peacefully in countries such as Britain, where they have the freedom to practice Islam, only until they gain enough power to engage in battle. His views explode the myth that the creed of offensive, expansionist jihad represents a distortion of traditional Islamic thinking. Usmani sat for 20 years as a *Shari'a* judge in Pakistan's Supreme Court and has been an adviser to several global financial institutions. Polite and soft spoken, he revealed to *The Times* a detailed knowledge of world events and his words, for the most part, were balanced and considered. He agreed that it was wrong to suggest that the entire non-Muslim world was intent on destroying Islam. Yet, this is a man who, in his published work, argues the case for Muslims to wage an expansionist war against non-Muslim lands.

Usmani's justification for aggressive military jihad as a means of establishing global Muslim supremacy is the climax of his book, *Islam and Modernism.* The work is a polemic against Islamic modernists who seek to convert the entire Qur'an into "a poetic and metaphorical book," because, says he, "they have been bewitched by western culture and ideology." The final chapter delivers a rebuke to those who believe that only defensive jihad is permissible in Islam. He refutes the suggestion that jihad is unlawful against a non-Muslim state that freely permits the preaching of Islam. For Usmani, the question is whether aggressive battle is by itself commendable or not. If it is, he contends, then "why should the Muslims stop simply because territorial expansion is considered there days as bad? And if it is not commendable, but deplorable, why did Islam not stop it in the past." He answers his own question thus: "Even in those days, aggressive Jihads were waged . . . because they were truly commendable to establish the grandeur of the religion of Allah." These words are not the product of a radical fanatic; they come from the pen of one of the most acclaimed modern scholars of Islam.[11]

There is no prospect of resisting and surviving this wave of renewed Muslim proclivity for confrontation and triumphalism unless one defines facts and events unequivocally and sets one's mind on facing them without recoiling. No other groups of people, no adherents of any other faith have so relentlessly vowed to destroy Western culture in general, and Israel in particular, as modern Muslims have. The repeated pledges of Iran's Ahmadinejad, who has nothing to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict, to "wipe Israel off the map" for purely Islamic reasons, have perhaps blunted the sensitivity of world peace and human rights champions, who, beyond the ritual statement that this is "unacceptable," have done nothing to oust the culprit from the international community of civilized nations or to discontinue their business with him. There are plenty of poor and frustrated people in the *favelas* of South America, the shack cities of Asia, and the jungles of Africa. But in none of them is this unstoppable desire to kill Westerners and Jews as evident and manifest as in the case of Muslims and their Islamikaze vanguards. Western countries have tried in vain to skirt the issue of Islamic terrorism in the hope that it might disappear. But it did not. Only a clear Western definition of what constitutes terrorism, which has to be announced, not negotiated, can indicate the decision of civilized nations to stand fast against this aggressive mood which nurtures jihad. In Muslim

eyes, terrorism is what is done to them, like the United States in Iraq, NATO in Afghanistan, Israel in Palestine and Lebanon, and India in Kashmir. What Muslims do is only self-defense; therefore they can never be accused of terrorism, meaning that any violent act committed by Muslims is justified by definition, because they are oppressed, humiliated, and frustrated by the Western rivals. While the West pursues the means-oriented criterion to define terrorism, namely that regardless of the goals or motives of terrorists, noble as they may be to them, innocent civilians cannot be harmed intentionally and indiscriminately, Muslim countries systematically reject this concept. For them, in the "struggle against tyranny and injustice," all means are acceptable and none of them is deemed illicit. For in the eyes of the radical Muslims, the citizens of Western countries and Israel, who share the "unjust and tyrannical" democratic regimes of their countries, cannot be deemed "innocent," and are in Islamic thinking "permissible.", namely liable to attack.

For many Muslims there is even a Qur'anic justification for terrorism *(irhab)* against unbelievers, since the holy text prescribes to Muslims to sow *irhab* in the hearts of the enemy. And since the enemy is identified as Israel or the West in general, that in itself provides a doctrinal rationalization of terrorism. Iran, Pakistan, Syria, the PA, and others continue to give shelter to terrorists, but they are rather proud of doing that, and no longer embarrassed. For the Iranians, al-Qa'ida, the Hizbullah, the Hamas, and such, encouraging terrorism is simply a practical manifestation of their doctrinal convictions and commitments. One should not be fooled by this double talk which reflects the Muslim state of mind. Even when they dispatch or *post-factum* approve of acts of obvious terrorism which they call "martyrdom," that is, praiseworthy and religiously sanctioned deeds (like Islamikaze), for the sake of Allah, that cannot be, by definition, called "terrorism," which is a downgraded and damnable mode of action in the West. That is the reason why whenever a major terrorist attack by Muslims is perpetrated against the West or Israel, there is jubilation in the Muslim street, regardless of the numbers of innocent civilian victims. That is also the reason why UN attempts to come to a unified definition of terror in order to optimize the world battle against it has fallen on deaf ears; as long as all Muslim countries insist that "resistance" against "occupiers" is not terrorism, and when they admit it is, then it is of the worthy martyrdom kind. Muslims reserve to themselves the right to define who is an occupier,

be it Israel in Palestine, India in Kashmir, Russia in Chechnya, the United States in Iraq, or NATO in Afghanistan. In a Muslim conference in Stockholm, Qaradawi made his differentiations, specifying that Islamikaze attacks (what we erroneously call suicide bombings, and consider the epitome of terrorism) are not only permitted in Islamic law, but condoned and recommended. His main arguments were summed up in a major Arabic medium published in London.[12]

In view of their understanding of the present state of affairs, Muslim militants have drawn several lessons and they prepared a blueprint for the confrontation with the West, which in its gradually emerging details is proving quite popular with the masses of Muslims in general, who are in no mood of compromise and accommodation. The sense that Allah has been blessing their venture is so deeply rooted in their hearts that they fear no fatigue, and they do not recoil from implementing their plan even if, or precisely because, there seem to be obstacles and difficulties on the way to realization. For Allah had tested in the past many of his followers and he ultimately ensured their victory, as one of his many names *(al-Nasser:* the victorious) connotes. Victory is sought and nothing less. The Muslims who wish to confront the West and Israel are equipped with the requisite faith, zeal, and enthusiasm, as the acronym of *Hamas* (the Islamic Resistance Movement) indicates; they are boundlessly devoted to Allah, as their various Hizbullah (Party of God) groups profess; are determined to pursue their *da'wa* (mission, call) the world over, as many of their organizations mention; are intent to wage a merciless jihad when their "peaceful" messages demanding surrender are not heeded by their enemies, as many of their associations ("Islamic Jihad") remind us; and lastly, many of them are coordinated by the main base *(al-Qa'ida),* physical and spiritual, which used to train candidates for Islamikaze, finance their operations, plan their schemes, and initiate the time and place of their spectacular strikes. Admittedly, after the temporary defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, al-Qa'ida is no longer what it was, and its activities have been largely decentralized, but the flame has not extinguished as evidenced by the spectacular comeback of the Mujahideen in the fields of Qandahar, Helmand, and Jalalabad during the US and NATO twelve-year struggle there.

While Muslim ambitions and desires are expressed and fought for by a handful of radical Muslims, who defy the superiority of the West and are

not deterred from a long war of attrition, whatever it takes, surrounded and encouraged by the sympathy of most Muslims who sit on the sidelines and applaud on occasion the victories of their coreligionists, the components of the Muslim blueprint, which are shared by most Muslims, can be summarized as follows:

1. The West must be defeated, or at least weakened, frightened, and put on the defensive. For not only does the West corrupt the Muslim world with its debauchery, permissiveness, alliance with certain Muslim countries, and its value-less societies, but by its posing a luring alternative to young Muslims, with its immodest dress, coeducation, pop music, pornography, mixed partying and frolicking, alcohol, and Western movies, it threatens the next generation of Muslims. Naturally, militant Muslims, with the acquiescent silent support of conservatives, dread the prospect of their societies slipping from under their grip and supervision. Therefore they enlist for their endeavor any Allah-fearing Muslim, who, though not necessarily of their affiliation, is concerned, like them, about the rapid drift of the young toward modernity and the West. This matter is particularly acute in the Palestinian territories, where their daily frictions with the Israelis make them more prone to such a deviation from traditional Muslim norms.
2. A first step toward the goal of defeating the West is to cultivate the rift between pro-Arab and pro-Muslim Europe, on the one hand, and "Zionist-controlled America" on the other. Thus, while both belong to the evil West, it is imperative to go easy on Europe for now, due to its assistance, both directly to the Muslim world and indirectly by diminishing America's power and somehow keeping it in check. This policy has proven a success for the time being, inasmuch as the European Council has been openly favoring the Palestinians over the Israelis despite American misgivings, while the Muslims have succeeded in enlisting the Europeans to their side in the Balkans (in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia). The Muslims have even managed to engage the United States in implementing jointly with NATO those European–Muslim designs. The change of government in the United States, with the seemingly more engaging policy of Obama on the one hand and the schism within the Palestinian people between the

Western-supported PLO and Muslim-supported Hamas, on the other, seems to dictate new adaptations of this policy orientation.

3. Europe's turn will come after America is driven out of its hegemonic status in the world and Israel is eliminated. Muslim radicals speak about their own *reconquista* in Europe, first of the territories that used to be under Muslim rule (Andalusia, southern France, Sicily) and then the rest of the continent. A special awareness of this turn of events has been evident among North African immigrants into Europe who are conscious of the historical reversal that has been under way. Indications of such a scheme dawned on the Europeans on the morrow of September 11, after which several major Islamic terrorist strikes were foiled in Paris, Strasbourg, and Brussels. Al-Qa'ida bases and undercover lodges exist in practically all European capitals and can be activated when time comes, as has been the case with the many terrorist attacks in Spain, England, and Germany since. Part and parcel of preparing for the showdown in Europe has been both testing the ground for the eventual Muslim takeover, first on the vestiges of Spanish colonial rule (Ceuta and Melilla) and some islands in the Mediterranean, and increasing the numbers of Muslim migrants to Europe. The more than 30 million Muslims in the 27-member EU, who constitute between 5 and 10 percent of the population in virtually all European countries, hasten to take up political rights individually, and then will begin to demand cultural and group rights. Only the reversal, of late, of the liberal multicultural policies in countries like Holland and England may begin to check that trend.
4. And above all, the United States, which by its military and economic power not only dominates the West and leads it but also attempts to battle Islam into submission (at least until Obama's advent to power), protects Israel and serves its purposes, and produces and disseminates the decadent subculture which arouses the wrath of Islam. The United States is deemed to be the first model of emulation for youth all over the world, including Muslims, and this circumstance is purported to be the reason for all the ills of the world. If America cannot be reduced to submission, then at least it can be battered, threatened, humiliated, and weakened to the extent that it would no longer be able to protect its citizens and its interests around the world. The rationale and purpose behind this outlook is so that its many allies, primarily Europe, Israel,

and the illegitimate Muslim regimes it sustains, would no longer trust the UN and rely on it. America is also singled out by the militants for being the only power that can, and is willing to, block effectively the fulfillment of their schemes. Hence the hatred of America, first and foremost, which is decried by the slogans and the propaganda statements of the militants and also by the massive acts of terror committed against it.

5. Pending the anticipated Muslim victory, much long-term groundwork is required, which the Muslim radicals wholeheartedly support and initiate, and even push Muslim governments and Muslim individuals to fund. The list is long: recruiting new converts in the West; lending financial support to families of martyred Islamikaze; raising money, either through bogus charitable organizations in the West, to be used against it, or from donor states or individuals (Saudi Arabia and wealthy sheikhs in the Gulf); erecting mosques and Islamic centers and *madrasas* in world capitals and significant concentrations of Muslims worldwide, ostensibly for Muslim populations in the West, but diverting their use to conversion programs, indoctrination, and the diffusion of hatred and propaganda; and recruitment of Islamikaze for martyrdom operations. They also use the funds to strengthen already Muslim countries of the periphery, like Central Asia and Indonesia, and raising Muslim consciousness among the Muslim minorities of Nepal, Thailand, India, Israel, Europe, and America. It is the fruit of such endeavors which supports the Taliban in the *madrasas* of Pakistan, the Shi'ite fanatics in the religious schools of Qom in Iran, the Hizbullah in the Lebanese fields of opium, the Islamikaze terrorists in Afghanistan, and the mosques of Europe and America, from whence emerged the planners and executors of September 11.
6. Jews, and by inference Israel and Zionism, have to be eliminated, according to this conviction, as Bin Laden, Iran, Hamas, Hizbullah, and ISIS have vowed. They are accused of having invaded the lands of Islam in Palestine and established the Zionist state, which in effect tore off a valuable piece of *dar-al-Islam* and turned it into *dar-al-Harb,* which requires Jihad for retrieval. The Jews constitute a Western salient in the midst of Islamic society which they intend to corrupt and undermine from within. The Jews stand accused of desecrating the holy places of Islam in Jerusalem with a view to insulting Muslims.

> And, most dangerous of all, they act as the American agent in the Middle East, hence their close links to Washington, to the extent that makes it hard to determine who is subservient to whom. For all these reasons, Jews are targets not only in their Israeli state, but worldwide, as the frequent attacks against them, throughout their world diasporas, have demonstrated.

Andre Malraux, the great French luminary of the first half of the twentieth century, saw before most others the coming of the aggressive wave of Islam in the contemporary world. It is worthwhile citing his immortal words:

> The violence of the Muslim rise is the great phenomenon of our era. Underestimated by most of our contemporaries, it can be compared to the beginnings of Communism under Lenin, and the full extent of its impact is still impossible to predict. At the beginning of the Marxist Revolution, the belief was prevalent that problems could be patched up by improvised solutions. But neither Christianity nor organizations of employers or employees could find the answers. Similarly, the world does not seem today able to face the problem of Islam, which seems to be even more difficult to confront. Maybe the limited French aspect thereof could be tackled if there were a real statesman around to deal with it. The impression is that various forms of Muslim dictatorship will prevail in the Arab world. When I say "Muslim" I do not think necessarily of religious, but of civil structures emanating from Mohammed's doctrine. Already now, the Moroccan Sultan, as well as President Bourguiba [of Tunisia], are acting as dictators of sorts. It may be that current problems could have been patched up if they had been undertaken in time. . . . But it is already too late. *"Les miserables"* have nothing to lose any more, they will prefer to preserve their misery within their Muslim communities, and their lot will probably remain unchanged. We regard them from a western angle, but they will probably prefer their own future to the welfare that we pretend we are able to bring them. Black Africa will not stay for long indifferent to this process, and all we can do is to become cognizant of the gravity of this phenomenon and try to postpone its breaking point.[13]

Notes

Hassan Turabi, “Islam and a Pan-National Movement,” *RSA Journal,* August-September, 1992, 608-19.

See D. F. Green, *Arab Theologians on Jews and Israel* (Geneva: Editions de l”avenir, 1976), where excerpts from the proceeding of the Fourth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research were published.

Al-Ahram Weekly, “Beyond the Vacuum”, April 13-16, 2006.

Executive Intelligence Review, September 4, 1998.

Al-Ahram Weekly, October 1, 2001.

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During the Muslim Rebellion in Yunnan, China, in the 19th Century, its leader, Du Wenxiu, assumed the title of *Qa’id Jami’al-Muslimin* (the Commander of all Muslims).

See for details, R. Israeli, *Islamikaze etc... ,* especially Chap. 2, 33-70.

Le Point, 1727, October 20, 2005, 37.

- Interviews with Sheikh Qaradawi, “Homosexuals Should be Punished like Fornicators, but their Harm Is Less When not Done in Public’, *Al-Jazseera,* June 5, 2005. Taped on video by Memri 1170, June 5, 2006.
- Andrew Norfolk, “Our Followers Must Live in Peace until Strong Enough to Wage Jihad,” *The Times,* September 8, 2007.
- *Al-Sharq al-Awsat,* July 19, 2003. These passages are translated and summarized in R. Israeli, *Muslim Minorities in the Modern States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2009), 101-3.
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2

ISIS, a State in the Making

Contrasted with the established radical Muslim states, like Iran and Sudan, observers of the Middle East and Islamdom have been baffled by the recurrent phenomenon of the "experimental" Muslim states which rise and fall, or go into a long process of becoming, which never comes to fruition, or, as soon as they are declared, crumble under the weight of their inadequacies. There are also cases where such states are eliminated by foreign interference. What comes to mind, of course, is the current (2014) attempt of the Islamic State (IS or ISIS or ISIL) to establish a caliphate in Syria and Iraq, with ambitions to expand into other areas of the Middle East, at the expense of existing states, whose boundaries are violated, signifying that international borders are no longer "sacred" in the eyes of Muslim radicals, who would rather see an overarching Islamic caliphate rise to unite all Muslim countries under one rule than perpetuate the post-World War I artificial boundaries set by great power agreements. These experiments in statehood are divided into several categories and we shall examine some of them. The most interesting attempt at statehood is being made by ISIS, against whom a wide coalition of Western and Arab countries has been waging a war of extermination which promises to be prolonged and costly. A caliphate was declared, all right, with a cleric—Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—designated as its ruler, but except for a few towns that are effectively run by ISIS, with minorities such as the Yazidis and the Kurds being persecuted and eliminated and abominable beheadings of individual prisoners, it is hard to detect amid this chaos signs of an orderly government taking shape.

ISIS has come under various appellations during the initial two years of its existence (2012–14). It started as *Da'ish,* the Arabic acronym of "The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" (ISIS), a translation which was expanded into ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), which interprets Levant as Greater Syria, comprising Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories. Lately, since the summer of 2014, the name of that

entity was further expanded into the IS, relinquishing the narrow limitation inherent in the definition of territorial boundaries and embracing a limitless and transnational territorial definition which lends to it a universal import, as befits an entity which pretends to be a caliphate, headed by an incumbent caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Sinai and the Libyan Muslim radicals have already sworn allegiance to Baghdadi and recognized his suzerainty.

The Baghdadi origin of the self-proclaimed caliph, which pretends to hark back to the illustrious capital of the Abbasids (750–1258), whose "Black Flags" symbols were also embraced by ISIS, explains their enthusiasm in conquering more and more territories, eying Baghdad as their ultimate goal, and also the tremendous popularity of that movement among Muslim youth of the world, including Muslim minorities and Muslim converts in Western countries. Justifying the universal title that this state in the making has taken on, territories outside ISIS, like the Sinai Peninsula, which has been taken over by the *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis* (the Supporters of the Holy House, i.e., Jerusalem), and the Egyptian troops are trying at a high cost to regain control of it.[1] That group, an affiliate of al-Qa'ida, has indeed sworn allegiance to al-Baghdadi and even asked for his military and financial assistance. The same has happened with the *Ansar al-Shari'a*, the Muslim dissident rebels of eastern Libya, who have declared their loyalty to IS. However, to gain a wide support by the Muslim establishment, beyond its immense popularity among the youth across Islamdom, this new caliphate needs to be recognized by the official Islamic institutions of the Sunni countries, lest it be considered a usurpation of power. In the case of Baghdadi, 120 top clerics of the Sunni world have issued a written statement in October 2014, clearly delegitimizing the self-declared chief of ISIS. While it is clear that those clerics come from within the Muslim regimes which oppose ISIS for fear of the threat it poses to their rule, it is also clear that without the support of those crucial institutions and chief imams and scholars of Islam, no caliph can be legitimized. This battle will then be decided, as it has so often before, between institutional Islam which is controlled by the established rulers, who act in unison with Western powers to defeat ISIS, and popular will which is bound to sweep the Muslim street everywhere.

Since the caliphate was officially abolished by Kemal Ataturk in 1924, the idea of the caliphate has been referred to either by trying to recreate the era of the Four Righteous Caliphs, which through the Abbasids had

designated the classic height of the Muslim favorite mode of government, or to duplicate the modern Sultanates of the Ottoman Empire, which dominated a span of time of more than a millennium but, according to some authors, was no more than a myth or a fantasy.[2] For Khaled Diab, the new caliphate declared by ISIS is ahistorical, because the Abbasids Dynasty was an impressively dynamic and diverse empire, thriving on multiculturalism, science and innovation, learning and culture, in contrast to the backward-looking ISIS's violent puritanism. For him, the revived idea of the caliphate, which itself waxed and waned throughout history, emerged from the dismal failure of modern Arab nationalism and of the promises of renaissance and progress that it had pledged. Hence, old religious and idealized myths of government are revived, out of the claim that since contemporary Arab society has reverted to pre-Islamic *Jahiliyya*, the only way to correct it was to declare jihad not only against foreign unbelievers but also against Arab itself in order to create a pure Islamic state society, one that has only ever existed in the imaginations of modern Islamic extremists.[3] The British *Guardian*, which labeled the caliphate as "a potent weapon in a digital propaganda war,"[4] found that ISIS was a slick media operator in addition to its battle successes, for example, when they declared the caliphate at the height of the holy month of Ramadan in order to maximize its impact. Thus, humorous comparisons were invoked to describe it, like "it has as much chance to survive as an ice-cream cone in the desert."

In any case, in spite of the Western-initiated campaign against ISIS, and some setbacks occasioned on the battlefront thanks to that intervention, like in Kobani on the Syria–Turkish border, the triumphs and popularity of ISIS are far from tarnished; its sources of income seem to augment with every oilfield they take possession of, and their glamorous image is as attractive as ever, with the multitudes of young Muslims streaming from everywhere to swell its ranks. Seemingly sure of itself, in view of its rapid successes, and proud of having been so powerful and important as to crystallize against it the worldwide coalition of the Western powers, supported by the conservative Muslim regimes who recoil from the challenge this state in the making may pose to their regimes, IS proceeds with publicizing the horrors they commit, like the executions online of their prisoners, the mass murder and starvation of the non-Muslims they come to dominate, like the Yazidis in Iraq, and the outright assassination of Muslim rivals, be they Sunnite or

Shi'ite, including helpless women and children that are abused before they are killed or sold in slavery. They have established their temporary capital in al-Raqqa, a town in northern Syria where they have imposed a Taliban-style strict Shari'a state,[5] maybe pending their takeover of Baghdad which is probably eyed as the proper capital to glorify the return of Baghdadi to the location of the glorious Abbasid caliphate.

Many and virtually everywhere are the manifestations of the tremendous impact that the IS has been radiating around it, to judge by the growing numbers of "volunteers" who flock to Syria and Iraq to fight alongside the IS troops. In addition, numerous are the reported cases of publicly displayed ISIS black flags, which carry the Islamic *Shahada* (Statement of Faith, loyalty to Allah and to Muhammed, his Messenger), or of support to the organization, or videos showing and praising the beheadings of prisoners by ISIS, and even videos online of children chopping the heads of their dolls in imitation of the IS executioners who behead their prisoners in reality. This is the kind of "education" many Muslim admirers of the ISIS wish to accord to their children, and this is the kind of general public opinion that has been reported among Muslim populations worldwide. This sort of reactions and attitudes has been studied in detail in Israel, and a few examples can be cited here:

a. Signs, posters, and banners appeared in the summer and fall of 2014 in east Jerusalem, in support of ISIS. One of them stated "wishes of affection and love from Jerusalem to the pride of Islam—Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi."[6]
b. A video clip filmed by an Israeli Arab from Taibeh showed a masked six-year-old child chopping the head of her doll which represented an "unbeliever." Behind her hanged an ISIS black flag; she stated for the record that "we are now going to the Islamic State in Iraq" and was busy chopping the head of her doll and at the same time shouting in unison with her father, the Islamic war cry: "Allah Akbar!"
c. In Nazareth, and in the historic city of Acre, as well as in some Galilee villages where a large Muslim population dwells, while the Gaza war was raging in July 2014, black flags were raised.
d. A young Israeli man, who was shaken by the publicized acts of murder, rape, looting, and forced conversions by ISIS, was seen

parading on the streets of Tel Aviv wearing a printed black flag of ISIS on his T-shirt, to raise the consciousness of the public to the phenomenon. Passersby hardly noticed that parade, except for an Arab shopkeeper who asked where she could get that shirt.[7]

e. The Arab-Christian news portal *Star 2000* also reported with concern at the end of July 2014 that a black flag had been hoisted facing the Basilica of Annunciation in Nazareth,[8] one of the holy sites of Christianity, which had been the focus of conflict between the Muslim majority and the Christian minority in Nazareth in the late 1990s, necessitating the intervention of the Israeli government.[9] That same report added that, in recent years, Christians in northern Israel were facing persecution, hostility, and threats from Islamic fanatics who were explicitly challenging the Christian creed.[10] The difference was that while previously green banners, in the color of Islam, were hoisted in order to provoke non-Muslims, lately it was black flags which replaced them.

On November 13, 2014, the Treasury of the IS organization announced its intention to mint a first series of coins to be used in the territory under its control. For the leaders of IS, this move has both symbolic and economic meaning. Not only does the minting of coins reflect the group's ambition to signal to its domestic public and its audience abroad that it is a sovereign state, not an organization, and to give this message iconographic expression, but it also constitutes another stage in realizing the radical revolutionary vision of IS, which includes establishing an Islamic religious monetary regime, free from dependence on the international financial system. The IS monetary initiative combines wishful thinking with reality and is unlikely to be an economic threat to the West. Nevertheless, by issuing an independent currency, it is taking a symbolic step that could improve its prestige in the eyes of Muslim target audiences, strengthen the sense of governance it projects at home and abroad, and consolidate its hold on the territory under its control. This is a direct order from the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The first issue includes seven coins of differing values, with the respective metals and weights chosen in accordance with Islamic religious law: the *dinar* (4.25 grams of gold), the *dirham* (2.975 grams of silver), and the *fils* (0.496 grams of copper).[11] IS

has been a political entity that is not recognized by sovereign countries and is struggling to establish its authority among those who are supposed to see themselves as its subjects. An independent currency will support its claim to sovereignty, while continued use of the currencies of states it aspires to dissolve weakens this claim. Furthermore, the symbols on the coins provide an additional layer for IS propaganda. They are intended to assist in inculcating among target audiences at home and abroad messages relating to IS identity, aspirations, borders, and guiding policy ethos. According to Ophir Winter who compiled this report, the symbols on the coins express the long-term strategic vision of the new state, if it should last in view of the coalition's pledges to "eliminate," so dangerous does it appear to the eyes.

The five-dinar gold coin showing the five continents and the copper ten-fils coin showing the Muslim crescent reflect the extreme messages that are the basis of IS ideology. The first image, as explained in official publications, symbolizes the claim that according to tradition God gave to the Prophet Muhammed, namely, that his nation would rule over territory from the eastern to the western ends of the earth. The Muslim crescent, which represents the Hijri calendar (beginning in AD 632) and is displayed on the flags of Muslim countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia is a Muslim symbol that speaks to the hearts of the global target audience that IS purports to represent. A spear and shield appear on the silver one-dirham coin, while the ten-dirham coin shows the Al-Aqsa mosque. According to official publications, the weapons symbolize jihad for God, that is, the violent struggle through which IS will realize its territorial ambitions. The choice of the mosque in Jerusalem, that is the third holiest site in Islam, shows that it is a future target for conquest by IS. This choice bespeaks the vitality of the ethos of the struggle to liberate Jerusalem as a source of national religious legitimacy. It also implies that the propaganda appeal of the struggle to liberate Al-Aqsa exceeds even that of the struggle to liberate Mecca and Medina, sites that according to Islamic dogma are holier. The other three coins have symbols with a particularist hue, which on the face of it contradicts the global message of IS. They were designed with the current borders in mind and inspired by characteristically Iraqi and Syrian symbols in order to market the new regime's revolutionary doctrine to the public in Iraq and Syria through a recognizable and accepted symbolic prism. For example, the twenty-fils copper coin has an engraving

with three palm trees. This tree is considered the national symbol of Iraq and has appeared over the years on many of its coins. The five-dirham silver coin shows a lighthouse in Damascus, through which, according to a prophetic tradition glorifying the Islamic mission of Syria, at the end of days, Issa ibn Maryam (Jesus Christ) will return to earth in order to defeat the *dajjal* (the false messiah), before he himself and all humanity convert to Islam. The one-dinar gold coin bears an illustration of wheat stalks, a traditional symbol of economic growth, which was also used by the regimes in Iraq and Syria.

In accordance with the Salafist doctrine of IS, for the first time since the end of the Ottoman caliphate (1922), the issuing of these Islamic coins will create a monetary system that is in keeping with the dictates of Islamic law, which rejects the use of bills, money changing, bond trading, and usury. According to IS ideology, the modern global economy relies on "worthless" paper currency and is responsible for periods of inflation, depression, and crisis. On the other hand, the use of gold, silver, and copper coins, which have an intrinsic value, will provide the IS economy with stability, immunity, and credibility and give the citizens confidence that their money will not lose its value because of a possible drop in exchange rates. According to the official announcement by IS, the new currency will enable it to break away from the "tyrannical financial system imposed on the Muslims, which has been a factor in enslaving and impoverishing them, in wasting the resources of the Islamic *umma*, and in making it easy prey for the Jews and Crusaders." Minting of the coins has been described as a step to escape the economic hegemony imposed by the United States and the "despicable band of Jews" in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, who "control the global financial markets." According to this conspiracy theory, the United States currently enj oys a monopoly over production of oil, "with which God graced the Muslim *ummah"* It is imposing use of the dollar as the sole currency for determining the oil rates, in order to steal the Muslims' money and resources and to finance its economy at their expense. Pure metal coins will liberate the Islamic caliphate from subordination to the dollar economy because it will not need recognition from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund and will be difficult to impose sanctions on it.

ISIS also believes that issuing its own coins will hasten the collapse of the US economy and lead to the decline of the United States as a global

power and the rise of the Islamic caliphate. It feels that the move will encourage other oppressed countries to follow in its footsteps, that is, to liberate their currencies from the humiliating Western hegemony and achieve financial independence. IS leaders believe that this chain reaction will cause the rapid collapse of “the economy of colored bills” and the creation of “a true economy of production,” which will change the existing hierarchy among the countries of the world and grant the Muslims superiority over the infidels. In the view of the author, the IS monetary initiative combines wishful thinking with reality and is unlikely to be an economic threat to the West. Nevertheless, by issuing an independent currency, it is taking a symbolic step that could improve its prestige in the eyes of Muslim target audiences, strengthen the sense of governance it projects at home and abroad, and consolidate its hold on the territory under its control. The plan indicates that for IS, conquering the old Muslim countries and destroying their institutions and frameworks is not enough, and that it will dedicate a portion of its resources to long-term processes of state building and the establishment of new Islamic symbols and mechanisms of government. Various reports show that IS has purchased gold, silver, and copper with the idea of implementing the minting project. IS has internalized that its political revolutionary enterprise, which began in the mosques and has continued in the battlefield, must also focus on mobilizing the loyalty of residents of the conquered territories, inter alia, through their purses. Those fighting against its ambition to realize its vision must internalize this, and the international community would do well to intensify economic pressure on IS. To this end, it should first and foremost continue attacks against the oil trade, which provides IS with liquid capital for its activities, including acquisition of the metals needed for minting coins.

An intriguing question remains: What makes this Islamic state, which is viewed in the West as a menacing terrorist group, into such a romanticized and attractive focus of attraction among Muslim youth in general, Israeli Arabs included? Many explanations have been proffered, chief among which has been the deep gap between the past glory of Islam, which is deeply venerated by every Muslim as a source of pride and self-esteem, and the sad reality of the present backwardness of the Islamic world, which has been placed for years in a row at the bottom of the list of the entire world in the UN annual reports of development. This gap, which most Muslims do

not even recognize, instead blaming the West or Israel for undermining Islam, exploiting it, cultivating hostility toward it, and at the same time celebrating themselves as the "elected nation of Allah" and pledging their return to the world stage as the dominant civilization after the West's demise and Zionism's evaporation, naturally drives all Muslims to frustration and even despair. Thus, like the hope evoked by the Khomeini Revolution in Iran (1978–79) and the Taliban upheaval in Afghanistan (1995–96), this fresh, pure, pristine, sweeping, and revolutionary regime of ISIS kindles the imagination of many Muslims, especially of the youth who flock in their thousands from all over the world, to fight enthusiastically for the cause and hope that are being raised by the vast and rapid successes of this novel movement, before it crashes, like other Muslim revolutions and Springs before it, and throws Islamdom into disarray once again.

The popularity of ISIS runs patently and incomprehensibly against the delegitimation the movement gets from the Sunni establishment in various Muslim states, especially al-Azhar. Indeed while 120 top clerics and doctors of the Holy Law issued an edict, reflecting the views of their governments, banning recognition of IS, knowing that without it no caliphate can be legitimate, al-Azhar stopped short of declaring its followers apostates.[12] This is not a simple matter since *Talfirism*, the practice of one Muslim declaring another to be an apostate, is controversial within Islam. While this is something that is actively practiced by Islamist groups like ISIS, it is generally rejected by adherents of mainstream interpretations of Islam. Al-Azhar declared in no uncertain terms that it "rejected the takfirism of ISIS. . . . Because takfirism cannot be applied to any believer, regardless of his sins," in a statement in response to comments made by the mufti of Nigeria during the previous week's counterterrorism conference in Cairo. During that conference, al-Azhar's Grand Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb called for joint Islamic efforts to combat ISIS, for "division, strife and polarization are the main tactics extremists are using to divide the Islamic nation." He stressed that ISIS militants were acting "under the guise of this holy religion and have given themselves the name 'Islamic State' in an attempt to export their false Islam." The mufti of Nigeria, Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh Al-Hussaini, later issued similar comments during the counterterrorism conference, saying ISIS was promoting a "false" Islam. However, despite acknowledging that ISIS was following a false interpretation of Islam, Azhar stopped short of explicitly saying that the jihadist group was non-Islamic, particularly given

the controversy that surrounds *talfirism.* The modern-day practice of takfirism was developed by Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Sayyid Qutb. He argued that the modern world was in a state of *Jahiliyya,* pre-Islamic ignorance, that lacked Islamic authority and therefore Islamic provisions could be circumvented, including those governing who is, and is not, Muslim. This is an interpretation that has been roundly rejected by the majority of mainstream Islamic bodies and scholars, including al-Azhar. The al-Azhar statement emphasized that

> All the clerics and religious figures who attended the counter-terrorism conference are well aware that they cannot issue such judgments against any believer, regardless of his sins. It is one of the tenets of Islam that only when one denies the *shahada* [the creed declaring that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger] that somebody can be said to be an apostate.[13]

A more expanded analysis has been offered by respected columnist Mordechai Kedar, a scholar and writer in Arab and Islamic affairs in his own right.[14] He points out that side by side with the tremendous popularity of ISIS, which draws droves of young Muslims from all over the world to Syria to risk their lives for the organization, there has been no sign of a protest or a demonstration against the IS anywhere in Islamdom, not even against its horrifying deeds of public executions, ethnic cleansing, forced conversions, mass massacres, enslavement of prisoners and women, looting of public funds, and other uncivilized acts of government. Does this mean that the Islamic world agrees with beheadings, mass murder of minorities, and the sale of women in the slave market? And another question that needed answering is why was Al-Qa'ida not as attractive as the IS during the peak years in which it operated as a united body under Osama Bin Laden? Apparently, to many Muslims, the IS appears to be the real thing—pure, holy, original, and unadulterated Islam. To them, it is the Islam that Muhammed brought to the world and that guided his cohorts and those who ruled after him. Many Muslims have read or heard about books on Islamic history, where the way Islamic forces had conquered most of the seventh-century world, butchering infidels, looting churches and monasteries, selling infidels on the market, and forcing those who were vanquished to

convert, is described with great pride—and without an iota of shame or regret.

Islamic historians, writes Kedar, have never felt the need to apologize for the way in which they conquered the world, adding insult to injury by constantly describing Islam as a "religion of peace," a mantra often repeated by ignorant Western leaders who seek more to appease their Muslim minorities or existing Islamic states than to learn Islamic history. The IS today is doing the same: it conquers areas, beheads some, crucifies others, sells men and women into slavery, just the way the first Muslims did in the seventh century, and it also cuts off the hands of thieves, stones adulterers, whips criminals, all in accordance with *Shari'a* law. Can any Muslim believer protest against *Shari'a?* Can he protest the return of Muslim practices to the glorious days of the Prophet and his followers? Can a Muslim criticize Muhammed's behavior when the Islamic faith declares him infallible? In contrast to Al-Qa'ida, which hardly ever took over territory in order to establish an Islamic state, perhaps except for its AQIM branch in North Africa which operates in large swaths of the Sahara, IS is the modern territorial expression of what seems to be the exact replica of what Muhammed created in the seventh century. The writing on the IS flag is taken from the seventh century, and followers believe that it includes Muhammed's seal. A good many IS fighters wear black, as did the early fighters for Islam. At the head of IS today is a caliph, the title given to those rulers who took over after Muhammed. This is a crucial point, because the institution of the caliphate was dissolved in 1924 by Ataturk (Mustafa Kemal), who has now been declared an enemy of Islam by the faithful. He obstructed *Shari'a,* set fire to mosques, closed *madrasas,* switched the writing of Turkish from Arabic to Latin letters, and tried to marginalize Islam in Turkey by every means at his disposal. IS, thus, has arrived to renew the caliphate, a subject that plays on a sensitive string in the Islamic heart.

Another issue is that IS does not hesitate to threaten the infidel Western powers and has no problem butchering American and British citizens—the symbols of heretic Christian Western hegemony. These murders are carried out confidently and unashamedly in front of the camera, while the murderers read a scornful English message meant for those countries' leaders, considered the most powerful men in the world, leading the strongest countries. The sheer audacity of IS makes Muslims all over the

world proud and makes them feel that this is the way a true Muslim should act and speak when faced with heretics. This issue is most important to the young Muslims living in Europe and the United States, who have not been absorbed into Western society and have developed feelings of rage against the countries in which they were raised. Their flocking to the jihad centers of Iraq and Syria stems from their desire to take revenge on the West for pushing them, the children of immigrants, to the periphery of society and for discriminating against them although they were born, raised, and educated in the West. Of late, several video clips have surfaced whose subject is the young Yazidi women handed over to the fighters of IS to serve as slaves. The clips portray the lighthearted bantering of the fighters prior to the young women's being divided up among them. In traditional Islamic societies, where men are not allowed to have any contact with women other than their wives, this relaxation of prohibitions acts as a strong drawing factor. The IS arrived in a world where social media—YouTube, Facebook, Twitter—are within everyone's reach, mainly through the use of mobile phones. The intensive utilization of these methods of communication by IS activists on Internet sites set up for that purpose facilitates recording their ideas, propagating them, and recruiting volunteers.

As researcher Reuven Paz advises us,[15] Israel and Jews are still not in the actual circle of enemies of IS and similar organizations, other than the radical groups operating in the Sinai Peninsula. But there is considerable concern that the day will come when they are viewed as targets for attack. He says that the struggle against the IS organization led by the United States and its allies appears thus far to be something of a Sisyphean war: ineffective, limited to scratches on the surface of the jihadi pyramid, does not touch the roots of the phenomenon, unable to end the civil wars in Syria and Iraq, and relegated to serve as another layer in the existing chaos in Syria and Iraq, and soon perhaps in part of Lebanon as well. The Syrian chaos in particular evokes conflicting interests among the various forces on the one hand, and a strange commonality of interests on the other, although this has still not led to practical alliances or actual cooperation among the various warring factions. At the center are President Bashar al-Assad and his regime; for its part, the Western coalition is unable to determine its position toward them. Assad has an interest in leaving IS and other organizations of its ilk intact so that the West will view them as the greater

Satan. To the moderate liberal forces in Syria, which have largely disappeared from the public arena, it is not clear who is more evil, Assad or IS. Turkey is entering this labyrinth and giving mixed messages. Iran, Hizbullah, and the Kurds are also players, and their position in the various equations is not clear. Iran, after years of being the nuclear terror of the West, has become an ally of sorts of the United States. At times it seems that the United States and the Obama administration still fear the volatility of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more than anything taking place in Mesopotamia.

For Paz, the destruction and devastation plaguing the Middle East is accompanied by a frightening thought in the Western world of IS alumni returning to their native countries to undertake terror attacks, and perhaps even behead innocent civilians. It finds relief in air strikes and partial humanitarian aid for the millions of refugees created by civil wars in the Middle East. However, the more the fight against IS takes the form of air strikes and while Western leaders do not even venture to hint that they might send ground troops into Iraq and Syria, the more attention is diverted from another aspect of the IS problem. Alongside IS are the many other radical Muslim movements. It is hard to differentiate from each other: al-Qa'ida; Jabhat al-Nusra, which is supposedly more moderate than IS; the Taliban, which is poised to take over Afghanistan again once the United States leaves; the Boko Haram, which terrorizes West Africa; and the Hamas, which preoccupies Israel's strategic planners. Other violent jihadi groups throughout the world and their supporting radical Islamic clerics, by virtue of the freedom of the Internet, are galvanizing their flock and moving them in apocalyptic directions. The West should be worried by the question of what causes so many young and not-so-young people from the West, Muslims and non-Muslims who have converted to Islam, second- and third-generation immigrants, to be so influenced by IS/jihadi propaganda that they join the struggle in relatively large numbers.

This phenomenon is not new, contends Paz. It began during the struggle against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and a similar situation developed during the war in Iraq in the 2000s. Those were years of phenomenal growth for the jihadi Internet, which brought the Islamic struggle to every young person with a keyboard. Even beheadings were shown on the Internet since 2002. Nevertheless, there were few such incidents and the number of volunteers was limited. Furthermore, in Iraq, in the 2000s, most

of the volunteers for jihadi organizations had been Muslim Saudi extremists. But now volunteering for IS and similar organizations seems to have become much more international, diverse, extensive, and on the rise. Volunteering for the jihadi ranks in Mesopotamia has become similar to volunteering for the International Brigades organized in the 1930s for the Spanish Republicans' struggle against fascism. One wonders why are analysts and commentators in the West not publicly disturbed by the growing number of volunteers for IS and similar organizations who are citizens of Western countries and by their motives, given the potential flood of terror liable to take place when these volunteers return home. Likewise noteworthy is the ease of volunteering and the short time that elapses between a decision to volunteer and implementation of the decision. Already in the past, there was only a short transition from a decision of the individual jihadist to carry out self-sacrifice to the actual execution, sometimes only a few days. This was the case among groups that underwent prolonged mental training, not necessarily organized, for the struggle against the enemy. There were many such examples among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza; Afghanis; Sunnis in Iraq; and Shi'ites in southern Lebanon in the 1980s. These populations had undergone training that included Islamic propaganda and justifications for the struggle against the occupier-that-be. The efforts to persuade young people from these societies to sacrifice their lives ran deep in society, were socially acceptable, and were infectious as well. Furthermore, among groups such as the Palestinians, in which many of those who perpetrated attacks were students with an academic education, these sorts of sacrificial attacks were also carried out because the perpetrators saw themselves as being part of the social elite, whose role was to lead the masses in the struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Such a vision, argues Paz, which smacks of romanticism and perhaps even altruism, appears to be typical, at least in part, of those who volunteer for IS and other such organizations at this time. It is difficult to explain why several thousand Muslims who live in the West want to go to Syria and join IS, while a large number of them have already realized this desire. Most are well integrated among the middle class, have a higher education, are not unemployed, and did not stand out for their ties to Islamist elements before they decided to volunteer, exactly the traits that had characterized the young homegrown British Muslims who carried out the July 2005 underground

bombings in London. Their process of radicalization took place very quickly, within a few months, and led them to a quick decision to go to Syria. These volunteers serve as very fertile ground for the influence of the propaganda of IS and other such organizations. This propaganda says that the organization's struggle in Iraq and Syria is a heroic struggle to save the entire Muslim world, which is suffering/oppressed/deprived *(mustaz'afin* in the Islamic term), due to tyranny that is ultimately, according to their belief, a clear result of a Western, "crusader" plot. The unswerving faith in the righteousness of the Islamic struggle and the great speed with which IS is advancing—not only in Syria and Iraq, but primarily in the arena of threats to the entire West, in addition to threats against Arab countries—are stoking the imagination of younger and older Muslims in the West and very rapidly loosening the fetters of their decisions. The September 11 attacks gave rise to feelings that the end of days was near and to a belief in the approaching victory of Islam. Similarly, many who write on jihadi websites today express apocalyptic feelings, either between the lines or in them.

As to the economic resources of the IS, it is a wealthy organization: it has wrested control over oil fields, and countries—most likely Turkey—buy oil from it, some directly and some indirectly. IS fighters rob banks, kidnap people for ransoms in the millions, receive massive funding from countries such as Qatar, and levy taxes on the populations forced to live under IS control in the areas it has conquered. All this enables IS to purchase arms, weapons, means of communication and transportation that create the image of success—and in attracting people, nothing succeeds like success. The IS has gained possession of arsenals of American weapons and arms that belonged to the Iraqi army. These are now in the hands of the jihadists. Some of the weapons airlifted to the Kurds fighting in Kobane in northern Syria fell into the hands of IS as, literally, gifts from heaven. Many Muslims believe that American weaponry that serves jihad fighters battling America is a sign from heaven that Allah is helping the jihad fighters win against their enemies by means of the enemies' own weapons.

Just for the sake of comparison, al-Qa'ida does not control any territory, does not collect taxes, does not force Shari'a law on local populations, has no caliph at its head, and even its jihad against infidels has waned over the years. al-Qa'ida's image is that of a tired, old, decrepit organization that has lost its way, while IS—at this point— seems a young and vibrant one, whose actions are in true accordance with Islamic precepts and which does

not give any consideration to the heretical, materialistic, and permissive cultural mores with which Western culture tries to inculcate Muslims all over the world. As things stand, IS will probably grow larger over the next few months—or years—and become more dangerous and influential in the Middle East and possibly the world. The author suggests that ISIS can be made to disappear in one of two ways. First is a battle to death that the world declares against it, putting "boots on the ground" to destroy or imprison the jihadists, down to the last man. The problem with this scenario is the high price for human life and resources the world will have to pay in order to bring it about. The second scenario is what has always happened in Islamic history: once a group begins to rule, internal feuds appear based on ideology, religion, funds, personal differences, tribal and organizational animosities, leading to eventual disintegration and its fall from power. The problem with this scenario is that it takes a long time and can span decades during which the organization continues shedding blood and turning its subjects' lives into hell.

Another evaluation of the IS in the making comes from Memri's Y. Carmon et al.[16] The authors determine that the cruel conduct of the organization has wrongly created the impression that it is nothing more than an offshoot of al-Qa'ida and has built up the expectation that ISIS was made to attack the West, taking advantage of Western passport holders to sow terror there, hence the urgency among Western nations to eliminate the organization as soon as feasible. This line of thinking was encouraged by the Saudi King, who expressed his confidence that those jihadists would reach Europe "within a month and to America within two."[17] But the authors conclude that the doctrine of IS, far from emphasizing world terrorism like al-Qa'ida, on the contrary, stresses the establishment of an Islamic state and its reinforcement; therefore it views the confrontation with the West as a further goal and in lower priority, thus emulating the *modus operandi* of the Prophet in ancient Islam. This is, in spite of ISIS's adherence to the principles of world jihad in the Path of Allah as advocated by the other radical Muslim movements, aimed at the establishment of a caliphate governed by Shari'a law. The order of priorities differs between al-Qa'ida who wants a world jihad before it erects the caliphate (Bin Laden had declared jihad against the Crusaders and the Jews on March 23, 1998) and the IS in which al-Baghdadi regards the establishment of the caliphate and its reinforcement as an absolutely existential imperative. So much so

that he considers as acceptable the need to negotiate and compromise with other parties in order to meet reality requirements, and even relegating to the remote future any confrontation with the West which might hinder the erection of the Islamic state.

The authors of this daring analysis cite one of ISIS's organs which claims that the "Islamic State is a historical feat which was created in order to pave the way to the great war [against the West at a later stage, meaning that ultimately they conform to the world jihadi doctrine. Thus, they disregard for now petty contemporary politics, like the Palestinian problem, whose solution is also deferred to the 'day of judgement,' and instead focus on affirming their rule in Iraq and Syria, especially the Sunni areas therein, postponing the conquest of the rest of the Muslim states to a later stage, according to an order that had been set in an ancient *hadith:* 'you shall invade the Arabian Peninsula, which Allah will deliver to you; then Persia, which Allah will deliver to you, then to Rome,[18] which Allah will deliver to you; and then you shall fight Satan, whom Allah will deliver in your hands.'" The spokesman of the organization has confirmed that the area between Aleppo (Syria) and Diala (Iraq) has been designated as the center from which the caliphate will grow out, hence the launching and the progress of the caliphate since its inception. In the meantime, the struggle against the West will be done by *Hijra* (like the *migration* of the Prophet from pagan Mecca to Islamic Medina in AD 642) of hordes of Muslims who flock from the world over to volunteer to fight for the caliphate or reinforce it in other ways. This is the exact reverse way in which other fundamentalist Muslims encourage jihad by means of *Hijra* into Western countries in order to undermine them from within. In fact, diaspora Muslims are encouraged to move into the Muslim state with their families, so as to make a contribution toward "liberating Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem," thus adding Israel into the loop of the enemies, though not the first priority. Moreover, even other jihadi movements are legitimate targets of the IS as long as they do not swear allegiance to the caliphate, for no other Islamic polity is permissible beyond the one and only all-encompassing Islamic state of all members of the Islamic *umma.* For example, the head of al-Qa'ida, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and the chief of the Jabhat al-Nusra, Abu Muhammed al-Julani, are treated with contempt by the IS due to their deviation from the "true Islamic model" of obeying the one IS caliphate.

This surprising attitude toward Muslim diasporas, which are usually encouraged by some jihadi movements to settle in permanence in their dispersions outside Islamdom, in order to facilitate terrorist activities in the West, of course translates into an indirect criticism of "hypocritical radical Muslim movements" outside Islamdom, which enjoy the material benefits of their dwelling in the West and make their contribution to Islam by surfing in jihadi Internet sites and portals instead of being present in the battlefront and participating in person in the defense of the IS. The critiques claim that those "hypocritical jihadists" in fact turn their backs to the IS and often declare their hostility to it, in competition with "crusaders and heretics" *(Salibiyun* and *Murtaddun).* In so professing, Baghdadi of course embraces the ultimate example of the Prophet (to whose tribe Quraysh he pretends to belong when adding to his name the attribute "al-Qurashi"), by adopting, for example, his cruelty toward his enemies on the one hand and at the same time by cutting deals and compromises with enemies on the other hand when they further his goals. For example, he strictly enforces Shari'a in the cities he controls but also sells the oil he robs to Europe in the black market.

Shortly after he took up the caliphate, Baghdadi circulated a video cassette calling upon Muslims everywhere, including those dwelling in the West, to immigrate to the Islamic State if they can, for dwelling in *Dar al-Islam* is an Islamic obligation. In effect, instead of stressing the Muslim tenet of jihad, as other jihadists do, Baghdadi and his spokesmen emphasize the obligation to rescue the caliphate from oblivion, without inciting against the West:

> Hold your heads straight! Now you have a state and a caliphate which return to you your dignity, your power, your rights and your sovereignty. The Islamic state created a link of fraternity between Arabs and non-Arabs, black and white. It unites between the Caucasian, the Indian and Chinese, the Syrian, the Iraqi, the Yemenite, the Egyptian, the North African, the American, the French, the German and the Australian. . . . They are all in the same trench, defending each other, watching each other and sacrificing for each other. Their blood mixes under the same banner, for the same goal and within one same camp. . . .[19]

Of all subsidiaries of ISIS, *Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis,* the radical group entrenched in Sinai and defying Egyptian sovereignty there, and *Ansar al-Shari'a,* the radical group that has taken over oilfields in post-Qaddafi chaotic Libya, are worth mentioning in the context of their announcing their allegiance to IS or personally to caliph Baghdadi, its nominal head. According to reports on news networks,[20] Sinai *Ansar* had previously told *Reuters* that it sought inspiration and advice from the IS, which was the radical al-Qa'ida offshoot that has taken over swathes of Iraq and Syria, drawing United States-led air strikes as it tries to remake the map of the Middle East. "After entrusting God we decided to swear allegiance to the Emir of the Faithful[21] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, caliph of the Muslims in Syria and Iraq and in other countries," the statement said. That militant organization is facing Egyptian security forces in a jihadist insurgency that has killed hundreds of soldiers and policemen since the army toppled President Mohammed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2012 after mass protests against his rule. In late October 2014, the Egyptian government declared a three-month state of emergency in parts of north Sinai following attacks that killed at least thirty-three security personnel in some of the worst antistate violence since Mursi's ouster. No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, but similar previous operations have been claimed by *Ansar.* Their precipitous statement of allegiance to IS, which is sign of their distress due to the military operations launched against them by the Egyptian army, is an indication not only of their ideology and aim, but also of their constraint to receive outside help in order to survive.

No account of the ISIS phenomenon can be complete without the "secret files" revealed by Christoph Reuter to *Der Spiegel*[22] about the ideological and structural makeup of this extraordinary organization, which seemed to emerge overnight from obscurity and quickly occupy the forefront of Middle Eastern and international news. The main stunning revelations of those papers can be summed up as follows:

1. A blueprint of the IS had been planned and calculated in detail long before it was declared, by a former senior Iraqi officer, Samir Abd Muhammad al-Khlifawi.
2. The plan called for capturing first as much territory in Syria as possible, then using that platform as a launching pad to invade Iraq.

3. The planner took up residence in the town of Tal Rifaat, north of Aleppo, whose residents had gone to work in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, bringing back with them radical Islamic views. In 2013, that town became the stronghold of IS in the Aleppo area, taking advantage of the devolution of power during the Arab Spring against the Assad Dynasty.
4. It is there that the detailed plan of ISIS grew in the shadows, all the way down to the local level, and lists were drawn relating to the gradual infiltration of villages and the way and time they would be overtaken by the movement. In its location, the local messengers of the group opened a *da'wa* office, that is, a sort of missionary office, then recruited followers who attended courses on Islamic life, while someone was selected to spy on his fellow villagers and obtain a wide range of information about them, including the powerful families, the powerful individuals among those clans, their sources of income, the size or rebel brigades against the regime and their leadership, and their anti-Sharia activities which may be used to blackmail them.
5. "Brothers" were sent to the villages to marry the daughters of the most influential families to ensure their penetration and ensure continuous reporting on the villages and towns, their imams and their beliefs and sermons, their association with or against the regime.
6. Emirs were designated for each region to be in charge of murders, abductions, snipers, and communications, with some emirs supervising others. A general intelligence department reported to the "security emirs" of each region, who were in charge of deputy emirs for each district.
7. The prescribed Shari'a laws were to provide surveillance and control via the Shari'a courts.
8. When a *da'wa* office opened in Raqqa, no one said a word about the IS; they just said that they were all "brothers," and it all looked like another Islamic charity office, one of many. No one thought that, apart from the Assad regime, there was anyone else who could threaten the population. It was only in January 2014, when the fighting erupted in earnest, that the word Da'ish (ISIS, ISIL, and finally IS) came up, by which time the organization had already rented several apartments in town where weapons had been stored and hidden for imminent use.

The same pattern repeated itself in Idlib, Azaz, Sermada, and dozens of other towns and villages, where black flags were hoisted and streets blocked off.

9. The Iraqi fighters for the organization remained inconspicuous at first, since they were prohibited from going to Syria at first. They even chose not to recruit many Syrians in the beginning. They rather elected to gather all the foreign radicals who had been coming to the region since the summer of 2012, such as militants from Saudi Arabia, office workers from Tunisia, and school dropouts from Europe without military experience, to form an army with battle-tested Chechens and Uzbeks, under Iraqi command in Syria.
10. By the end of 2012, IS established military camps in various places, where volunteers from many places trained and were prohibited from talking to the press. The training lasted two months and included unconditional obedience to the central command. The trained foreigners were detached from their environment, knew no one except their comrades in arms, and had no reason to show mercy toward anyone, unlike the Syrian rebels who fought to defend their turf. In fall 2013, ISIS listed two thousand five hundred foreign fighters in the Aleppo area alone, with Tunisians representing one-third of the total, followed by Saudis, Turks, Egyptians, and smaller numbers of Chechens, Europeans, and Indonesians.
11. ISIS increased its clout by having its men always appear wearing black masks, which not only made them look terrifying, but also meant that no one could know how many of them were actually there. When groups of two hundred fighters appeared in five different places, one after the other, it did not mean that ISIS had deployed thousand fighters at once, or any other number.
12. Spies ensured that the IS leadership was constantly informed of where the population was weak or divided or where there was local conflict, allowing ISIS to offer itself as a protective power in order to gain a foothold.
13. Raqqa, once a sleepy town on the Euphrates River, thus acquired importance as to become the IS capital city, in March 2013, when it was swiftly and completely taken over, after it had been subtly penetrated and up until brutality broke into the open when it became

necessary to prevail over opponents. Then, a city council was quickly elected; professional associations of doctors, lawyers, and journalists were formed; and women's groups were established, as well as youth assemblies, all under the cover and supervision of the new authorities. This was coupled with the elimination of anyone who might have been a potential opponent. For example, the existing head of the Local Council was kidnapped in May 2013 by masked men, followed by other prominent persons who "disappeared" without leaving a trace. Thus the system of fear began to take hold on the city and throughout the land. In the summer of 2013, hundreds and then thousands of people disappeared, and only rarely were their bodies found. One of the ways to eliminate rivals was to dispatch "suicide cars" to their troop concentrations, killing dozens of them and causing others to run away. Shortly thereafter, fourteen chiefs of the largest clans gave their oath of allegiance to caliph al-Baghdadi.

14. In 2014, there was an unspoken collaboration between ISIS and the Syrian armed forces, with Assad regularly refraining from bombing IS positions in northern Syria, while concentrating their fire against the various groups of rebels which threatened the regime. In return, ISIS refrained from shooting at the army. In fact, ISIS threw its entire arsenal against the rebels, sending more suicide bombers into their ranks in just a few weeks than it deployed during the entire previous year against the Syrian Army. In fact, thanks to additional air strikes, IS was able to reconquer territory that it had previously lost to rebel groups. For example, when the 17th Syrian Division was isolated near Raqqa under rebel siege for more than a year, IS units defeated the rebels there and Assad's Air Force was once again able to use the base for supply flights without fear of attack. But six months later, after IS conquered Mosul and took control of a gigantic arms depot there, their fighters felt strong enough to turn against their erstwhile helpers and they attacked Division 17 and massacred its soldiers.
15. Despite the setbacks of ISIS, when they lost Kobani to the Kurds and the city of Tikrit to Iraqi troops, the regime in the making of the Caliphate seems to be able to avoid the peril of overextension and to insist on stabilizing the regime before it expands further, as the new push toward Palmyra and its environment would indicate. In fact, in spite of the continued harassment of the Americans and their allies'

> constant bombing, which have admittedly destroyed oil wells and hurt ISIS in more ways than one, it does not seem that the emerging state has relinquished any of its war aims or relaxed its financial, religious, and administrative control over the area it controls. Nor has the enthusiasm throughout the Muslim world, which has directed since 2012 throngs of Muslim volunteers to the battlefields of ISIS, seemed to recede.

In view of the escalating conflict on the ground, the dissolving boundaries of the states of Syria and Iraq, the devolution of power from the center, and the apparent weakening of the erstwhile central government, it is impossible to predict where the swing of the pendulum will lead in the next turn. What is certain is that the Middle East is changing, the clout of Iran will mount, the future configuration of what remains of Syria and Iraq will take years to crystallize, and that ISIS, under any shape it takes, will assuredly play a great role in what will emerge to replace it.

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3

Other International and Transnational Radical Movements (Al-Qa'ida, Muslim Brothers, Taliban, Boko Haram)

Boko Haram

Tragically, this movement of Muslim radicals has so overwhelmingly taken the limelight of the media by its infamous horrors against other Muslims that it has overshadowed and pushed to the sidelines the much older, yet still unresolved, Biafra crisis involving the massive oppression by the Nigerian federal government against the Igbo people precisely in proximity to the north eastern region of Nigeria where the Boko Haram is operating. The Biafran crisis which lasted from 1967 to 1970, was in fact a movement of secession by the Igbo from Nigeria due to economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions among the various peoples of the country. The creation of the new state that was pushing for recognition was among the causes of the Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Nigerian–Biafran War. But the state was formally recognised only by 5 countries, while other nations which did not give official recognition did provide humanitarian support and assistance to the dissident country. After two-and-a-half years of war, during which a million civilians had died in fighting and from famine, Biafran forces agreed to a ceasefire with the Nigerian Federal Military Government (FMG), and Biafra was reintegrated into Nigeria. Now the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) which advocates a separate country for the Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria has been revived accusing the state of marginalizing the Igbo people. MASSOB says it is a peaceful group and advertises a 25-stage plan to achieve its goal peacefully.[1]

Boko Haram means literally the "Forbidden Book," a reference to the Western books, culture, and education that are prohibited by this radical

Muslim group in northern Nigeria, the most populated African country (ca. 175 million people), which is split between the Muslim north and the Christian south. Like in other Western colonies in Asia and Africa, when international boundaries were drawn between the colonial powers toward apportioning territories due to become independent, little consideration was accorded to ethnic, linguistic, tribal, or religious differences, so as to found more or less homogeneous political entities, and resulted in a hopeless mixture of peoples and cultures, which have been for the most part spending more energy and wasting more resources to disengage from the groups and entities forced upon them than to integrate and form a joint national unity held together by a social contract acceptable to all. The religious clash between the Muslim radical Boko Haram and the rest of the population, especially the Christians, is such an outcome, though here it assumes a fanaticism that is nurtured by religious hostility, unlike the Tutsi and Hutu in East Africa or the Congo and Katanga controversy at the center of the continent.

Officially, the group calls itself *Jama'at Ahl al-Sunna Lidda'wa Wal-Jihad* (People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad), and it is a militant Islamist movement based in northeast Nigeria. The group, numbering a few thousands at the most, was designated by the United States as a terrorist organization in November 2013. It may have killed in its terrorist activities, which are focused against local Christians, more than five thousand civilians between July 2009 and June 2014, perhaps more victims than its own membership, in attacks occurring mainly in northeast, north central, and central states of Nigeria. Since 2009 Boko Haram has abducted more than five hundred women and children, including the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in April 2014. Six hundred and fifty thousand people fled the conflict zone by August 2014, an increase of two hundred thousand compared to the year before. After its founding in 2002, Boko Haram's increasing radicalization led to a violent uprising in July 2009 in which its leader was executed. The government establishment of a state of emergency at the beginning of 2012, extended in the following year to cover the entire northeast of the country, resulted in a marked increase in both security force abuses and militant attacks. It proved ineffective in countering the insurgency, hampered by an entrenched culture of official corruption. Since mid-2014, the militants have been in control of swathes of territory in and around their home state of Borno, but have not

captured the capital of the state, Maiduguri, where the group was originally based. The uncompromising hostility of the northern Nigerian Muslims toward anything remotely perceived as foreign, a mindset of *Boko Haram* that has in the past been applied even toward vocal recitation of the Qur'an, has historically been a source of friction with the Muslims from the middle of the country. Thus, Boko Haram has also been translated as "non-Moslem education is forbidden," "Western influence is a sin," and "westernization is sacrilege."

Mohammed Yusuf founded the sect that became known as Boko Haram in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of the northeastern state of Borno, establishing a religious complex with a school which attracted poor Muslim families from across Nigeria and neighboring countries. The center had the political goal of creating an Islamic state and became a recruiting ground for jihadis. By denouncing the police and state corruption, Yusuf attracted followers from unemployed youths. He is reported to have used the existing infrastructure in Borno of the *Izala Society,* a popular conservative Islamic sect, to recruit members. The *Izala* were originally welcomed into government, along with people sympathetic to Yusuf. The Council of Ulama of Nigeria advised the government and the Nigerian Television Authority not to broadcast Yusuf's preaching, but their warnings were ignored. Yusuf's arrests elevated him to hero status. Boko Haram was founded as a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist sect advocating a strict form of *Shari'a* law and developed into a Salafist-jihadi group in 2009, influenced by the Wahhabi movement. It seeks the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria and opposes the westernizing of Nigerian society that has concentrated the wealth of the country among a small political elite, mainly in the Christian south of the country. Nigeria is Africa's biggest economy; 60 percent of its population of 173 million (2013) lives on less than $1 a day. The Shari'a law imposed by local authorities, beginning with Zamfara in January 2000 and covering 12 northern states by late 2002, may have promoted links between Boko Haram and political leaders, but was considered by the group to have been corrupted.

Boko Haram kills people who engage in practices seen as un-Islamic, such as drinking alcohol. In a 2009 BBC interview, Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram, claimed that Western education "spoils the belief in one God." He also said: "Like rain, we believe it is a creation of God rather than an evaporation caused by the sun that condenses and becomes

rain . . . Like saying the world is a sphere. If it runs contrary to the teachings of Allah, we reject it. We also reject the theory of Darwinism." Boko Haram conducted its operations more or less peacefully during the first seven years of its existence, withdrawing from society into remote northeastern areas. The government repeatedly ignored warnings about the increasingly militant character of the organization. In 2009 police began an investigation into the group code-named "Operation Flush" On July 26, security forces arrested nine Boko Haram members and confiscated weapons and bomb-making equipment. Either this or a clash with police during a funeral procession led to revenge attacks on police and widespread rioting. A Joint Military Task Force operation was launched in response, and by July 30, more than seven hundred people had been killed, mostly Boko Haram members, and police stations, prisons, government offices, schools, and churches had been destroyed. Yusuf was arrested and died in custody "while trying to escape." He was succeeded as leader by Abubakar Shekau, formerly his second-in-command and interestingly enough carrying the same prestigious name of the first caliph, Abu Bakr, as the head of IS in Syria and Iraq.

Boko Haram has maintained a steady rate of attacks since 2011, striking a wide range of targets, multiple times per week. They have attacked politicians, religious leaders, security forces, and civilian targets. The tactic of Islamikaze was introduced by the organization in the two attacks in the capital on the police and UN HQs. In Africa as a whole, it had only been used by al-Shabab in Somalia and, to a lesser extent, AQIM. Since early 2013, Boko Haram has increasingly operated in northern Cameroon and been involved in skirmishes along the borders of Chad and Niger. It has been linked to a number of kidnappings, often reportedly in association with the splinter group Ansaru, drawing the group a higher level of international attention. Beginning in August 2014, it changed its "hit-and-run" tactics, instead occupying swathes of territory in northeast Nigeria from which the increasingly beleaguered Nigerian military were unable or unwilling to expel them. President Goodluck Jonathan was elected in 2011 and immediately after his assuming office in May, Boko Haram initiated a series of bombings, including in the capital Abuja. The most "successful" of these was the attack on the army barracks in Bauchi. A spokesman for the group told BBC Hausa that the attack had been carried out as a test of loyalty, by serving members of the military hoping to join the group. This

charge was later refuted by an army spokesman, who claimed, “This is not a banana republic.” However, on January 8, 2012, the president would announce that Boko Haram had in reality infiltrated the army and the police, as well as the executive, parliamentary, and legislative branches of government. Boko Haram’s spokesman also claimed responsibility for the killing outside his home in Maiduguri of the politician Abba Anas Ibn Umar Garbai, the younger brother of the Shehu of Borno, who was the second most prominent Muslim in the country after the Sultan of Sokoto. He added, “We are doing what we are doing to fight injustice, if they stop their satanic ways of doing things and the injustices, we would stop what we are doing.”

Due to the spread of Boko Haram to adjoining countries like Cameroon, an agreement was signed between it and Nigeria in February 2012 to establish a joint border security committee, geared to coordinate border patrols between the parties to try to seal the border to hostile operations of the Boko Haram. In 2014 Boko Haram continued to increase its presence in northern Cameroon; in May, it abducted ten Chinese workers and in July, the vice president’s home village was attacked by around two hundred militants; his wife was kidnapped, along with the Sultan of Kolofata and his family. At least fifteen people, including soldiers and police, were killed in the raid. In a separate attack, nine bus passengers and a soldier were shot dead and the son of a local chief was kidnapped. Hundreds of local youths are suspected to have been recruited. In August, the remote Nigerian border town of Gwoza was overrun and held by the group. In April 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped 276 female students from Chibok, Borno. More than fifty of them escaped soon, but the remainder have not been released. Instead, Shekau, who has a reward of $7 million offered by the US DOS since June 2013 for information leading to his capture, announced his intention of selling them into slavery. The state of emergency was extended in May 2013 to cover the whole of the three northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe, raising tensions in the region. In the twelve months following the announcement, Two hundred fifty thousand fled the three states, followed by a further one hundred eighty thousand between May and August 2014. Two hundred ten thousand fled from bordering states, bringing the total displaced by the conflict to six hundred fifty thousand. The US Bureau of Counterterrorism provided a summary of Boko Haram’s 2013 foreign operations:

In February 2013, Boko Haram was responsible for kidnapping seven French tourists in the far north of Cameroon. In November 2013, Boko Haram members kidnapped a French priest in Cameroon. In December 2013, Boko Haram gunmen reportedly attacked civilians in several areas of northern Cameroon. Security forces from Chad and Niger also reportedly partook in skirmishes against suspected Boko Haram members along Nigeria's borders. In 2013, the group also kidnapped eight French citizens in northern Cameroon and obtained ransom payments for their release. The US State Department designated Boko Haram as a terrorist organization in November 2013, citing various reasons including links with AQIM, "thousands of deaths in northeast and central Nigeria over the last several years, including targeted killings of civilians."

The State Department currently believes Boko Haram is affiliated to al Qa'ida. The Nigerian government claims that Boko Haram is "the West Africa branch of the world-wide Al-Qa'ida movement with connections with Al-shabab in Somalia and AQIM in Mali." Boko Haram gets funding from bank robberies and kidnapping ransoms. Equipment captured from fleeing soldiers keeps the group constantly well-supplied. In February 2012, recently arrested officials revealed that while the organization initially relied on donations from members, its links with AQIM opened it up to funding from groups in Saudi Arabia and the UK. The group also extorts local governments. In the past, Nigerian officials have been criticized for being unable to trace much of the funding that Boko Haram has received. Boko Haram has occasionally been connected in media reports with cocaine trafficking; however, there appears to be a lack of evidence regarding this means of funding. The Nigerian military is, in the words of a former British military attaché speaking in 2014, "a shadow of what it's reputed to have once been. It's fallen apart." They are short of basic equipment, including radios and armoured vehicles. Morale is said to be low. The country's defense budget accounts for more than a third of the security budget of $5.8 billion, but only 10 percent is allocated to capital spending. In a 2014 US DOD assessment, funds are being "skimmed off the top," troops are "showing signs of real fear," and are "afraid to even engage." In July 2014, Nigeria was estimated to

> have had the highest number of terrorist killings in the world over the past year, 3477, killed in 146 attacks. “Boko Haram are better armed and are better motivated than our own troops. Given the present state of affairs, it is absolutely impossible for us to defeat Boko Haram.”

An interesting comparison between Boko and ISIS was offered by author Ioannis Mantzikos,[2] suggesting that while Boko voiced an informal support for ISIS, Abu Bakr’s leadership springs directly from the former strongman of al-Qa’ida in Iraq, Zarqawi, while Shekau’s relationship with al-Qa’ida’s affiliates is rather strained. At the same time, since al-Qa’ida has supported Boko financially, the author doubts whether the group would risk alienating its informal relation with al-Qa’ida. This is a crucial point because while ISIS has been financially self-sustaining, Boko is still dependent on outside funding. Boko also occasionally attacks Muslims, while the present head of al-Qa’ida, Zawahiri, has shown concern about that as he has also voiced regarding Zarqawi previously and ISIS now. Another major difference is that al-Qa’ida has been interested in global jihad, more than in the conquest of territory, while Boko Haram, following the model of ISIS, is more inclined to expand the territory it controls. In fact Boko has been taking advantage of the lawlessness in adjacent neighboring countries to expand its control of the border areas of Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, despite the fact that it lacks good training, equipment and command, and control abilities that ISIS possesses. Also, while ISIS enjoys a steady flow of volunteers from abroad, Boko relies solely on its own local human resources.

The author also identifies the Boko Haram as a political insurgence, implying ISIS is a religious rebellion, an assumption that is questionable in view of the manifest political aspirations of Baghdadi in handling the revolution and building the caliphate on the one hand, and the enforcement of religious puritanism in Boko-controlled territory on the other. Both organizations are similar, at any rate, in considering any non-Sunnis, including Christians and Shi’ites, as infidels who must pay the *Jizya* poll tax to their Muslim masters or face death or expulsion. But in Nigeria the religious conflict is mainly concentrated in the tensions between the Christian south and the Muslim north, and the treatment of the Igbos and Yorubas is made on a tribal base, while the annihilation of the Yazidis, Westerners, and Shi’ites in Iraq is done on a religious basis. If that is the

case, it would be understandable why the highest Muslim authorities in the world, who represent “true and tolerant Islam,” have condemned the abduction of three hundred female students by Boko in Nigeria, most of them Christians, some of whom were converted to Islam in their captivity.[3]

Al-Qai’da and Muslim Brothers

This sort of Islamic movements, who are present almost everywhere, under various appellations, has been established for many years, and hasdeclared its aspirations to struggle against the West and the Jews, in anticipation of the creation of a world Islamic caliphate and world domination. They also act also among Muslim minorities in the West, either as local Muslim associations or under the cover of charitable organizations which raise funds for charity but channel them to terrorist organizations. Even clearly parochial movements, like the Hizbullah in Lebanon, can aspire to international standing, when they expand their operations worldwide, sometimes aided by terrorist countries like Iran, which can use their worldwide official diplomatic facilities to aid the terrorist movements in smuggling weapons and funds in diplomatic pouches, as in cases like Argentina and Bulgaria, where Hizbullah mounted attacks against visiting Israelis and diplomats or against local Jews. Al-Qa’ida and the Muslim Brothers come to mind as the most prominent international Muslim radical movements, with their many ramifications and world distribution. Al-Qa’ida was the first Muslim movement which proclaimed its universal mission to combat America and the Jews (not Zionism or Israel), seeing them as the two major obstacles in its way to declare world dominion for Islam, America worldwide and Israel (all proportions guarded) locally in the Middle East. Both are accused for systematically “humiliating” the Muslims, meaning that by their very technological superiority, their democratic regimes based on participation and popular consensus, and their prosperity, they expose the impotence of the Arab and Muslim regimes to reach that level of development and well-being despite the fabulous resources. Thus, for them, it is better to ignore their adversaries’ advantage and destroy the objects of their envy, than recognizing and accepting their own inherent deficiencies. Since the removal of al-Qa’ida from Afghanistan and its dismantlement, the organization has been decentralized and it operates mainly from separate and semi-independent branches in Africa,

Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. In fact, all Islamic movements which attract Muslim youth from all over the globe, like the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and ISIS in Syria and Iraq, are being internationalized not only by their doctrine and aspirations but also by the convergence of Muslim youth across the world, including from among Muslim minorities in the West, to swell their ranks.

Al-Qa'ida and Its Regional Extensions

We have understood by now that many of the categorizations of these Muslim radical movements overlap, as purely local groups, like ISIS and Boko Haram, can assume international importance and resonance, especially when they are successful and gain world attention, while other groups, like al-Qa'ida and Muslim Brothers, with declared universal aspirations may be constrained to confine themselves to certain localities or regions where they struggle to survive. We have seen how al-Qa'ida had constructed its networks first in Sudan and then in Afghanistan under the leadership of Bin Laden, then extended its presence to the West and to Asian countries, and finally was decentralized since it lost its one base of refuge in Afghanistan. But at the same time its branches keep expanding regionally and locally in Yemen and North Africa, and lately its new chief, Ayman al-Zawahiri, announced its implantation into India. The most prolific and high-profile manifestations of al-Qa'ida activities in the Middle East, however, are in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen and in North Africa. These arenas of battle, turmoil, and bloodshed, which have been retaining the attention of the world and necessitating great power intervention since the early 2000s, are all connected to the many branches and numerous metamorphoses and transformations that al-Qa'ida has undergone since the dismantlement of its center in 2001 and the evolution since of its local and regional offspring.

The unfortunate history of Iraq, which was founded following the defeat of the Ottomans in World War I, from the artificial merger of three former provinces *(vilayet)* as an Arab kingdom under a British mandate, has known an uninterrupted series of violent acts, coups, civil disruption, rebellions, frictions, and interethnic and interreligious clashes, mainly due to the forced combination into one state of various ethnic groups (Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen) and religious communities (Shi'ite majority and Sunnite

minority), together with an entire gamut of ancient Christian churches like the Assyrians, many of whom were forced under the pressure of violence to migrate to the West unless they converted into Islam. In the modern era, in the wake of the violent coup against the monarchy in 1958, in contrast to the relatively tame nature of the 1952 Revolution of the Free Officers in Egypt, a series of military takeovers followed until in the last of them, in 1975, Saddam Hussein, the vice head of the Revolutionary Council, was set on the trajectory to soon become the dictator and head of the most cruel of tyrannies, under the cover of the *Ba'ath* Party (The Revival), which had been founded in Syria in the 1940s and dominated the two countries since the 1970s under Saddam and Hafez Assad, respectively. However, contrary to the Tunisian *al-Nahda* (also meaning Awakening) which aspired for Islamic revival, the *Ba'ath* professed nationalism and socialism. All Iraqi upheavals were accompanied by extensive killings, cruelty, and exploitation of the country's rich oil reserves to afford a heavy rearmament of the country and a wasteful public spending as to satisfy the corrupt character of the rulers. But, no tyrant in that sad history had come even remotely close to Saddam, who established new records of murder and cruelty toward his own people and to the reign of terror that even the Assads in Syria did not attain. He especially annihilated Shi'ites and Kurds, including using chemical warfare to slaughter them in the thousands. Externally too, he waged an eight-year-long war with Iran (1980–88) which cost one million casualties, invaded Kuwait in 1990 until expelled by the Americans in 1991, and only after America's incursion once again in 2003, on the merit of seizing nonconventional weapons and ejecting the tyrant, did a first normal election take place under American guidance, which brought the Shi'ite majority in command of the state destiny.

Thus, in contrast to Iran, which is also predominantly Shi'ite, Iraq under Saddam looked so fatally trapped in the dictatorship of the Sunni minority, based in Tikrit in the northwest, in the heart of the Sunni Triangle, and so frightened by the impending ruthless retaliation that would descend irrevocably on whoever resisted that tyranny, that liberation seemed all but impossible. Indeed, as he expressed his dreams of *grandeur* by building several palaces and by investing foolishly in the military, for no one threatened him, he determined that he needed a million-man army to attain his goals and boasted that he could "burn half of Israel." He developed nonconventional weapons in order to lend himself credibility as the leader

of the Arab world. He was, for many of his fellow Arabs, the new Saladin, following the death of his great predecessor in that role model—Abdel Nasser of Egypt, who was thought to resolve all Arabs' problems and bring them salvation and greatness. He pledged to destroy Israel and was the only Arab leader who promised and paid every family of Palestinians who fell in battle a pension of $25,000. Above all, he craved for an opportunity to take over most of the oil resources of the Gulf so as to bring the world to its knees and to become the sole arbiter of power and wealth in the world. For that, he planned and executed his invasion of Iran, hoping to take advantage of the chaotic state of revolutionary Iran and seize its Gulf coast, Arab-inhabited Khuzestan, centered on Khorramshahr, which would allow him to expand his oil resources and his narrow coastline on the Gulf for his coveted navy. But his bloody war of eight years against Iran with its million casualties ended inconclusively, in spite of the massive support he got from the Arab countries in the fateful "jihad against the Iranian idolaters," as Saddam put it. Two years later, after he had slightly recovered from the Iranian fiasco, he tried again, this time on the other side of the Gulf in Kuwait, which once again would afford him oil riches and coastline of which he had only a trifle. Had he pursued his invasion into Saudi Arabia and not allowed the United States the time to gather a coalition to defeat him, he may have pulled a tremendous victory out of his hazardous gamble, but he did not, so he was forced out of Kuwait, and the rest is history.

On the occasion of Saddam's defeat and forcing out of Kuwait, the Shi'ites rebelled, and this could have been their finest hour, had the Americans not betrayed them and left them to be massacred by Saddam after they had encouraged them to rise. But, in reality, their liberation from Saddam did not come until 2003 when, in the wake of the American incursion, Americans found that the Shi'ites had lost their trust in them. But the Shi'ites knew how to renew their stamina for a new attempt at liberation when, after the capture of the dictator and his execution, they exploited the American-imposed elections to set up successive elected Shi'ite governments to manage the affairs of the country, even though terrorism and insecurity, instigated by supporters of the *ancien regime,* continued unwavering. But the two successive terms of office of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, which had alienated the Sunnis, could not bridge over the yawning gaps that had divided Iraqi society since its inception. So much so that he was forced out of office by international pressure, mainly due to the

ISIS successes in northern Iraq which had added to the social, economic, military, and political turmoil in Iraq, after the ISIS committed acts of horror against the Yazidi community, massacring them, forcing them to convert, or raping their women and selling them to slavery. In fact, American and international intervention to fight against ISIS and assist the new Iraqi government are based on the assumption that when ISIS is beaten and defeated, the Iraqi regime will be able to stand on its own feet and reestablish order in the country.

The Kurds, one of the major ethnic and regional components of modern Iraq, who have allied with the Shi'ites since their takeover of government in 2003, count on their formal autonomy which is constitutionally as one of the three constituents of the state, and their representative was made the president (though only for protocol) of the federated state. When the Americans departed from Iraq in 2011, before they were invited to return to rescue Baghdad from its ISIS assailants, the security problems aggravated. There was little concern for human life in the entire country, given the nonexistence of an efficient law and order enforcement agency, and the unresolved problems of food and electricity supply. The political system is still fragile, and there is no certainty that, unlike in Japan after the world war, the American-imposed constitution and political system would endure. Conversely, neighboring Iran, which has had a great influence on the Iraqi upheaval and thereafter, due to their common Shi'ite background, opposes some of those American reforms as contradicting Shi'ite doctrine and threatening its interests in the Gulf area. Here too, much time would be required before stability is achieved and clear boundaries are set to the Iranian interference in the affairs of its junior Shi'ite sister in Iraq. Also, as the most important Shi'ite holy places, like Najaf and Karbala, are located in Iraq, open borders for the free flow of people on holidays of pilgrimage are required, a situation which can be pregnant with many scenarios for meddling in the affairs of the country. All in all, it should be remembered that the achievements of these changes in Iraq were only made possible thanks to American help, for had they not cleared the way by eliminating Saddam and his regime, it is doubtful whether his terrifying conduct would have left any chance to the Shi'ite rebels to redeem themselves and emerge as free and independent people.

There is another doctrinal aspect which may complicate things in Iraq even further, for the Iraqi doctors of the Holy Law react to politics

differently than their neighbors, even though close relationships are tying them together—they share common holy sites, holidays, and religious customs with the Iranians, and they also regard Qom, the holy city of Iranian Shi'a and its main center of religious thinking and study, as theirs too, a kind of al-Azhar for the Shi'a. To all those places, millions of believers flock from both Iran and Iraq on days of *Ashura,* for the bloody and frightening rituals of the *ta'zya,* the identification with the suffering and death as martyr of Hussein and his retinue. But the Iraqi Shi'a, although it also gave rise to some celebrated Ayatollahs whose authority was widely recognized, like Kho'i and Sadr, always lived by the passive model of old, being unable to shake the yoke of Saddam's oppression. Therefore, they never converted to the active model of Khomeini that made the mullahs part of the state hierarchy, not only spiritual guides. Whether or not Iranian sponsorship over Iraq will extend after the departure of the Americans, to impact the Iraqi order by the twin innovations of Khomeini— *Wilayat al-Faqih and Marja' Taqlid*—it will take a long time before the newly set political parties in Iraq relinquish their newly acquired powers, and the revered Iraqi Ayatollahs, chief among them Sistani, would revise their reluctance to get involved in politics.

The main danger now looming in Iraq's horizons is the ISIS attempt to claim Iraq as the domain of its declared caliphate and Baghdad as its capital as it was in the glorious times of the Abbasids. The fact that its chief is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi lends an appearance of "legitimacy" and "authenticity" to this revolution, claiming that it is a local native who challenges the existing rule and fights foreign invaders in the name of Islam, not an invading outsider. It is true that the American coalition, with the collaboration of the monarchs around the Gulf, has been gnawing at IS, hitting its heads and slowing down its sweeping conquest and worldwide popularity among young Muslims, but there are enough volunteers flocking to swell its ranks, enough tenacity to wage the battle around key areas like the Mosul Dam and the border town of Kubani, and enough enthusiasm in its ranks to resist the coalition's onslaught and to ensure a final victory eventually. The harsh criticism voiced against ISIS for its rampages among conquered civilian populations, its massive acts of murder against helpless civilians, including women and children, and its attempts to intimidate its terrorized victims into converting to Islam or lose their lives does not seem to have had any deterrent impact on the leaders and the fighters in the ranks of ISIS, in spite

of the heavy losses incurred on the part of their many rivals: Iraqis, Kurds, Hizbullah, and some militias fighting against the Assad government in Damascus.

Lebanon has been the most difficult to define, of all Arab countries, due to the existing yawning gap between its official government and the actual rule of the country by the troops of Hizbullah, which acts on behalf of its masters in Syria and Iran, regardless of Lebanese national interests. Some commentators believe that Hizbullah will not be able to bear Assad's disappearance, due to his sponsorship of its activities and the vital link he provides between it and Tehran, hence its response militarily and its active participation in the fighting in support of Assad, and the heavy losses it is prepared to undergo in the process, which have nothing to do with its anti-Israel *raison d'être*. Others emphasize that Hizbullah has been strengthening its fortifications in southern Beirut's Dahiya neighborhood, at a time when Hassan Nasrallah, its leader, has increased his verbal attacks in all directions, which is usually a sign of panic and weakness. Moreover, clerics who support the Hizbullah have been issuing a series of *fatwas* (religious verdicts), allowing their party (the Hizbullah) to fight even against the Lebanese troops internally when the chips are down, and for the Syrian forces externally, or both, if and when an inevitable civil war again breaks out in the country, or orders are received from Iran, or from a surviving Assad, to direct the guns and missiles toward Israel. The view prevails that Hizbullah will be able to take over the government in Beirut through a military coup, whether amid a massive civil demonstration, the scope of which had allowed it in May 2007 to take over parts of Beirut, or using its abundance of weapons to create chaos in the country, and then pose as the savior of its sovereignty, something that is surely to be opposed by the rival factions.

Lebanon has lived since its independence under the shadow of larger and more powerful Syria, and therefore nothing that was done or undone there could escape the scrutiny of Damascus. Through a chain reaction of international events, the Syrian-Iranian axis, which had been forged by the Iranian Revolution with isolated and resented Hafez al-Assad in the Middle Eastern scene, has extraordinarily reinforced the Syrian-Lebanese nexus as Tehran created its Hizbullah proxy in Lebanon and then involved it in the civil war of Bashar Assad against the rebels trying to dislodge him. Thus, even when President Bush imposed a siege on Damascus and forced it to

withdraw its forces from Lebanon in the years preceding the Arab Spring, Iran's influence in Lebanon via its Hizbullah client did not diminish one iota. Lebanon today, though it maintains the similitude of independence, is actually under the thumb of the minority Hizbullah, which, via threats of violence that the Lebanese official authorities are unable to counter, actually imposes its will on the entire country and paralyzes the popular will which would have elected to keep away from both the Syrian civil war which is sapping the battling power of the Hizbullah that had been established to fight against Israel, not against Syria in the first place; and from its submission to the Iran machinations in the Middle East, which are geared to serve Shi'ite, not Sunnite, interests in the region.

Many things have changed since that day of 2007, when as a result of Assad's humiliation by the United States he was constrained to evacuate his occupation troops from Lebanon, the Hizbullah intervened by force to take its predominant part in Lebanon's politics. First, one has to recall that the quota system that had been the base of Lebanese politics since the 1940s, where the presidency went to the Maronite-Christian community, the prime ministership to the Sunnites, the speakership of Parliament to the Shi'ites, and so on, had been altered by the Ta'if Accords of the 1980s, mediated by Saudi Arabia, which had accepted Syria's role in Lebanon due to what it thought was the stabilizing effect it had on the country. Little did it envisage how destructive Syria would become to the equilibrium in Lebanon due to its alliance with Hizbullah and with Iran. In fact, the new arrangement not only recognized Syria's advantageous position, but although it did not nominally change the quota communal system of dividing power, it made sure that nothing could be done or decided domestically in the country without Damascus' approval. Syria ensured this through its agent Hizbullah, which gained the veto power in government, although it constituted a minority in the cabinet. Hizbullah, which was until then a military movement, constituted by Iran among the Shi'ites, who had been downtrodden and exploited for generations, after the Israeli incursion into Lebanon in 1982, took on the aspects of a political movement with representation in Parliament and in the cabinet so as to gain legitimacy as a political force in the country.

Hizbullah, which is armed to the teeth, especially with missiles and rockets from Iran and Syria as its proxy, became an important player in Lebanese politics and imposed its will, backed by its sponsors, to maintain

its private militia and armament, which made it a powerful military actor, for whom the weak and spineless Lebanese forces have become no match. Thus, while the president has remained Maronite and the prime minister Sunnite, and so on, none of them could be "elected" unless agreed upon by Hizbullah/Syria/Iran. This made the top Lebanese politicians in government the stooges of this unholy triangle, and they could maintain their positions only through their assiduous commute between Beirut and Damascus, and occasionally Tehran, and their total submission to the Syrian representatives in Lebanon, military or civil, who called the shots. Even Walid Jumblatt, the son of the legendary Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt, who was in opposition to Syria and one of its major critics, had to repent and make the pilgrimage to Damascus to prostrate before Assad. Little did he know that, briefly thereafter, Assad's legitimacy would itself be shaken by the uprising against him from the onset of 2011, and that this humiliating measure of sycophancy would be in vain.

Hizbullah's claim to legitimacy is not only its military power, which is in fact the only real military force in Lebanon and the only massively armed power which can maintain some equilibrium of fear with Israel, but also the fact that it has a political, financial, and military backing from outside the country. There has been a strong, mainly Christian, opposition as well as Sunni rivalry to the subversive power of Hizbullah in its service of foreign interests, especially in the times of Rafic Hariri, the Saudi-supported millionaire builder who was prime minister and put in some of his private resources to rebuild the country after the civil war; but he was assassinated by the Hizbullah–Syrians–Iranians, and his son Saad was appointed instead, in line with the tradition of son often succeeding father in the destructive quota system that was gradually falling apart. The key was the changing demographic proportions between the various communities, with every one sensing that it grew more than others and demanding a new census to determine the new distribution of power. But the new census never took place, though everyone knew that Christians were no longer the largest community and therefore no longer deserved the presidency. Conversely, as the Shi'ites grew in number, they claimed the primacy in the new power configuration. Both communities were satisfied by the Christians keeping the top political post, but provided they followed the Syrian *diktat.* The Shi'ites have been watching with pride their Hizbullah militia occupying a prime and independent position in government beyond their numbers (a few

thousands only), while the much larger Shi'ite population comprised in the Amal Movement and in Shi'ite commoners in the south are kept in their marginality.

The political balance until the Spring broke out (December 2010), and disturbed the Arab and Islamic scene, essentially maintained the Hizbullah as the real power broker in Lebanon, not by the power of legitimacy but by the legitimacy of power. The Lebanese public remained divided. On the one hand are parts of the Christians, like the Christian militias of Samir Geagea, previously loyal to the Jumayyil family, the founders of the Phalanges who oppose Islamic rule, the Sunnites who support the Hariri family, and some minorities like the Druze who were aligned on this side until their leader defected to Syria just before the Spring; this faction was in power with Saad Hariri, the prime minister, enjoying American and Saudi support, and clamoring for the publication of the investigation results of the Hariri murder, commissioned by the UN, but never published, in a shameful submission of the international body to Hizbullah threats of violence. On the other hand are the March 8 Forces, which comprise a part of the Sunnis now in government who obey Syria, in collaboration with some Christians who perversely support Hizbullah, like Michel Aoun, one of those turncoats who make Lebanese politics so hazardous, unreliable, and unpredictable; most of the Shi'ites who relish the power wielded by their community; and other undecisive and undecided elements in the shifting sands of Lebanese politics. In view of the fragility of the Lebanese army, which is ostensibly made up of members of all communities, and can break up at the first sign of a renewed civil war, Hizbullah stands as the pillar of defense of the country, paradoxically as its head, Hassan Nasrallah, has been hiding in a bunker since 2006 when his forces were crushed by Israel. The issue of Hizbullah's declining status was addressed by editors of two Lebanese dailies associated with the March 8 Forces. Ibrahim Al-Amin, editor of the Hizbullah-affiliated daily *Al-Akhbar,* wrote that only "divine help" would save Hizbullah in its current state. Some ten days later, he even called on Hizbullah to leave the political arena and focus on resistance, in order to improve its situation. Sati' Nour Al-Din, editor of the pro-Syrian daily *Al-Safir,* assessed that the Shi'ites' silence over the actions and statements of Sunni extremists throughout Lebanon—especially those of the cleric Al-Assir—stemmed from weakness and fear. This fear, he said, was triggered by the possible collapse of the Syrian regime, which has heretofore supplied

the Shi'ites with weapons that gave them an advantage over the other sects in the country.

Indeed, it can be assessed that the weakening in Hizbullah's standing has been caused by the decline in Syria's status in Lebanon; by the growing power of Sunni Islamic forces throughout the Arab world, and especially in Syria and Lebanon; and by Hizbullah's unwavering support for Assad, whom many Lebanese regard as a tyrant oppressing and butchering his people. Al-Assir accused Hizbullah of using its weapons not to promote the Palestinian cause but rather to control Lebanon and subjugate it to Iran. In a July 6, 2012, speech, he called Nasrallah and Berri (the Shi'ite speaker of Parliament) "war criminals" and blamed them for all the assassinations and assassination attempts in Lebanon since the murder of Rafic Al-Hariri in 2005. Al-Assir did not confine himself to verbal attacks. On June 27, 2012, he and hundreds of his followers—men, women, and children—launched an indefinite sit-down strike at the northern entrance to Beirut demanding to disarm Hizbullah, and even blocked traffic on the main highway to the city. Al-Assir said that Hizbullah's weapons "have lost their honor in the eyes of most Lebanese," because, since Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000, they have served the organization as a tool for taking over Lebanon. Since Hizbullah became actively involved in the civil war in Syria, losing hundreds of fatalities in the service of a foreign state, at the instigation of Iran, resentment against it in Lebanon has increased by those who do not wish to preserve Assad's rule and by those who hate to see the movement sapping its forces for alien interests.

Al-Assir also rejected Hizbullah's claim that the demand to disarm it was a "Zionist and American demand," adding that the Sunnis were slaves to no one and that he does not fear his actions could spark a civil war in Lebanon. On the contrary, he said, what might lead to civil war is the public acquiescence to Hizbullah's takeover of Lebanon by means of its weapons. He threatened to escalate his struggle and said he was even willing to martyr himself, if necessary, while stressing that all his activities would remain nonviolent. In a July 13, 2012, sermon, still prior to Hizbullah's involvement in the fighting in Syria, Al-Assir threatened Nasrallah that if the latter failed to heed to his demands, he would "harm him as [even] the regional and global forces have not harmed him," adding "The balance of power has shifted, and now we [Sunnis are the ones who will] determine how you [Nasrallah] and Nabih Berri will enter South [Lebanon]." He

demanded that Nasrallah undertake serious talks with President Michel Suleiman and Prime Minister Najib Mikati on the issue of Hizbullah's arms. It should be mentioned that, on June 11, 2012, a new round of national dialogue talks began between various political forces in Lebanon. One of the issues to be discussed was the illegal weapons held by various organizations and bodies in the country, the most prominent of them being Hizbullah. The Lebanese Forces party, headed by Samir Geagea, boycotted the talks on the grounds that Hizbullah had no serious intention of giving up its weapons. Al-Assir endorsed this position, saying that the national dialogue was in an impasse. While Hizbullah's involvement in Syria has been deepening, and its battle experience has been hardening its position, it is also evident that even its staunchest supporters as the only real fighting force in the country have been raising a question mark of its capacity to fight on two fronts if need be. That is the reason why, in October 2014, probably to counter the criticism that the movement had neglected the Israeli front, it initiated clashes with Israel on the Hermon sector, although it is evident that Nasrallah had no interest at that point to cause a flare-up with Israel.

Of all Islamic countries, perhaps Syria has been the most bleeding and unruly and has become the arena for most of the Islamic radical groups fighting the regime and seeking to dislodge it from power. But, unlike Tunisia and Egypt, where the pre-Spring leaders understood their hopeless situation in the face of the enraged masses, at a time when their main pillar of power—the army—had moved in support of the people, the strong Syrian army that had been strengthened by Assad the father, and then his son, and educated for over forty years in loyalty to the leader and to the Alawi sect, has persisted in its support and devotion to the ruler. For the Assads knew that seizing power was a one-time feat, but maintaining it in their hands was a permanent struggle, because losing it means their slaughter by the Sunni majority who disliked it quite intensely. They thought that they were secure only as long as they could hold the reins tight on top of the tiger back, and as soon as they dismounted they would be swallowed pitilessly. Hence the ruthless nature of the regime of Assad the father, which survived only by terrorizing its citizens, amid a permanent menace that whoever raised his head was susceptible to lose it. That lesson was learned by the Muslim Brothers who paid for their uprising in Hama in 1982 with twenty thousand dead and the destruction of the old city which

had become their fortress for their last stand against their cruel regime. In the Spring thirty years later, where Assad the son has launched an all-out attack against his citizens who fear him no more, the toll has attained tenfold that figure and even surpassed it. But there is no telling, as the battles intensify and the toll rises, how much more blood will be spilled before that most tenacious of tyrants is toppled.

In his ruthless fight for his own survival, Assad has used not only the national army which was supposed to defend his people from its enemies, and in so doing, he lay siege against his own cities and neighborhoods as if they were enemy territory, using artillery, air force, and armor, but also gangs of thugs, the *shabiha* (armed militia loyal to the regime, like the Iranian *Basij)* who kill indiscriminately hundreds of people, giving the regime the opportunity to claim that its own hands are clean. The regime also uses fighters, advisers, and weapons from Hizbullah and Iranian revolutionary guards, who regard Assad's fall as the collapse of their entire Shi'ite radical front that was leaning in the past two decades on the Tehran–Damascus–Hizbullah–Beirut axis, whom Turkey joined for a while, until it realized that its NATO and US obligations will not tolerate this alliance for long. And when Assad's evil caused the massive flow of refugees into Turkey, Ankara found itself compelled to disengage from Syria totally and stand at the forefront of those in the West who seek Assad's demise. The rebels in Syria, who for the most part are comprised of Muslim radicals, were right when they accused Assad of his impotence vis-à-vis Israel, which he knew could react violently and humiliate him if he dared to attack, while against his own citizens he behaved completely ruthlessly. Therefore they constantly challenge him to direct his weapons against their common enemy on the Golan, instead of against them. They also ask for Western intervention to rescue them from Assad's massacre, as it did in Libya, or at least to send them enough weapons to enable them to withstand the assaults of the powerful Russian-equipped Syrian military. They did not understand that the West, which cannot stomach casualties, intervenes only in situations of weak resistance like in Libya and Africa, and in ways, like in Libya and Iraq, solely from the air that would not cause it such losses as to arouse public opinion against their leaders in place. In Syria, by contrast, the Syrian land army and air defenses are on paper larger than those of the shrunken military of NATO, save the United States, and while America

would not dare open another front when its involvement in Afghanistan has wound up, no one else would venture into the Syrian quagmire.

It is quite surprising that the Syrian army has remained so far loyal, on the whole, to the leadership, unlike in Egypt and Tunisia, and even more amazing how the regime remains obtuse to the daily sights of children and their families cut down in indiscriminate fire, and their entire city neighborhoods bombed and destroyed and turned into war zones where no longer can normal life be conducted. Refugees in the hundreds of thousands have been streaming to the four adjoining countries of Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Lebanon, pursued by fire, bombing, and shelling of Assad's forces into their shelter countries, while the number of casualties has already surpassed anything Syria has known during its bloody history. Nearly all the public institutions of education, health, food supply, housing, and social welfare have come to a standstill, with all the state resources directed to the military only. All this demonstrates, sadly and dramatically, what tribalism can do to a country when central rule devolves, citizens of the same country turn overnight into sworn enemies, the national army into a servant of the ruler, the rebels into the enemies of the country and the people, and others who operate against the regime into foreign agents, terrorists, and subversive elements who deserve death and are treated accordingly. It is true that these extreme manifestations of cruelty and disregard for human lives and welfare are full blown when the regime is in danger or the tyrant fights for his life, but they are always latent under the surface, always on the brink of exploding, and there is nothing in the state structure and institutions to hold them from happening. Under these conditions, the commoners who go by their daily routine, and are afraid to trigger this kind of violent eruptions against them, usually bend their heads and are ready to absorb in silence many of the abuses of the rule, like killings, torture, arrest, and sudden disappearance of loved ones, with no independent juridical institution to appeal to as a matter of survival. The very same simple folks whom we saw outraged, tormented, and prepared to rebel in Cairo, Aleppo, Tripoli, and San'a during the Spring had walked the same streets one year earlier, full of praise for their leaders and running short of words to laud the freedom, prosperity, and good order they were basking in under their generous and benevolent leaders. What has happened in the interval? Nothing, except for the incentive to rise and speak up. Thus, not a sudden act of cruelty, mismanagement, or a whim has prompted these people to rebel, to throw

their yoke, to overcome their fear, and to shout out loud “enough is enough! We shall tolerate no more!”

Rebelling Syrian radicals like *Jabhat al-Nusra,* and the foreign volunteers who came to swell their ranks, had from the outset no model to follow, despite Turkish efforts to peddle their regime as a worthy one. During Erdogan’s visit to Egypt after the Spring broke out, he counseled the Brothers to disinherit the military from its prerogatives as he had himself done. Before that he had turned Assad into his ally and even counseled the Americans to end the Syrian isolation and retie diplomatic relations with them, which they foolishly did, and then had to reverse when the Spring broke out and Erdogan became the leader of the call to remove Assad altogether from power since he “had lost legitimacy,” as if he ever had it, as he and Obama wished to believe. Both of them never recognized their grave mistake in public, nor the tragic damage they had caused to the Syrian people by leading Assad to believe that he had their support and could behave at home as he wished. The Arab League, which was embarrassed to expose in public the massive killings of Muslims by Muslims that went on in Arab lands, day after day, saw fit to address the UN and ask for a solution, bearing in mind that in Libya it was foreign bombing which enabled the rebels to overcome Qaddafi and murder him. This Arab initiative was once again, as in the case of Libya, led by the Emir of Qatar, who wished the affair to remain within the boundaries of the Muslim family to care for and who had a personal interest to quiet the situation down, lest its permanent brewing transported it to his monarchy and his other monarchical neighbors too.

But this whole enterprise grew into a bad joke, when in order to keep the unrest within its Arab contours, “observers” from the Arab League were delegated to reach a cease-fire between the fighting forces and put an end to the endless killings throughout the cities and towns of Syria, with the Armed Forces of Assad taking the lion share of the killing, in view of the ill-equipped rebel forces who could not match the jets and tanks of the national troops. The farce slowly emerged the moment a Sudanese general, who had participated in the mass genocide of the Darfur population, and himself belonging to the entourage of General Umar Bashir, who was indicted by the International Court in The Hague for genocide and crimes against humanity, and considered as a fugitive criminal from justice since his country refused to extradite its president, was appointed as the head of

the UN-Arab League mission of observers. That mission was posted on the ground for months and then withdrawn as ineffective, as it could not sanction Assad for his crime on the one hand, nor respond to the rescue cries of the displaced and threatened populations on the other. Kofi Annan, the previous UN secretary general, stepped in, promising to do through diplomacy what the others could not do to reach a settlement; and though he was seconded by a new mission of international observers headed by a Norwegian general, they all resigned their posts and avowed their failure, after Annan's trips to Damascus, Tehran, and the Western capitals boiled down to nothing. It was declared that the UN observers could not endanger their lives in the war zone, and therefore they had to be withdrawn, as if firefighters retreated for their inability to extinguish the fire, and let it burn. UN incompetence in solving real conflicts and stopping killings was again dramatically exposed, as was the fact that except for seeking to be reelected and maintaining a mammoth and wasteful bureaucracy, UN general secretaries after Dag Hammarskjold were all spineless and ineffective failures.

In the meantime, the massacres by the Syrian army in the service of Assad continued, while the weapons smuggled to the rebels, from Turkey or from Western and Arab countries, which hoped to gain something from their ultimate victory, have had little effect and only tended to prolong the conflict, because there were equally determined allies of Assad, like Russia and Iran, who were interested in Assad's survival and they continuously equipped him with the most needed ammunition and other supplies to last this protracted and exhausting conflict. In the township of Triemse, west of Damascus, under the torrid heat of July (2012), 150 civilians were murdered by regular soldiers, and while the ineffective observers were rushing there to report the slaughter instead of preventing it, Assad's troops were on their way to another township on the Turkish border to perpetrate another mass murder. When these were terminated, a squadron of helicopters was sent to Khirbet Ghazaleh, in the Der'a area where the rebellion had started about a year and a half earlier, to bomb it, then assaulted it with tanks and infantry until it was totally conquered, and then they set afire the abandoned town whose inhabitants had fled for their lives.

These three horrible massacres were but links in the long series of crimes done on a routine basis by all the tyrannical regimes of Syria and other Arab countries, which preceded the Spring, and became so matter of course

that only few were surprised by them or dared to protest against them. But the Israeli neighbors of Syria, who are tormented and pained by what they see around them, say to themselves that if this is the way Arabs deal with their kin (and they did the same in Libya, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and among various factions of the Palestinians), one can easily imagine what fate would be reserved for Jews and Israelis, if Arabs had the opportunity. Hence their determination to draw this lesson from the Spring events, and vow to themselves and to the world how one must stand on his own when one is doomed to live in one's prosperous and pleasant villa in the middle of a bad neighborhood in the middle of the jungle. In fact, they need hardly to guess or to draw analogies in view of the terrorist war that organizations like the Hamas, Hizbullah, al-Qa'ida, and countries like Iran and Syria, wage against Israel and world Jewry when they are not busy in their own wars, or the casualties they have inflicted in other major terrorist acts in New York, London, Madrid, Bali, Mumbai, and so on, and the many more massive terrorist attacks they concoct against civilians but are foiled daily. This all shows the blood-thirsty character of these groups, peoples, and regimes, who educate their youth in the same spirit, lest the horrifying heritage be forgotten.

The Turkish prime minister (now President), Erdogan, who within one year shifted from the defender and ally of Assad to his sworn antagonist, partly due to the large numbers of Syrian refugees who continue to flock to his territory, has been the most severe outsider demanding the ouster of the regime, probably in an attempt to cover up and palliate the resurgence of the Armenian grievances against the massacre committed on their people by the Turks during World War I, and push to the sidelines the horrors done by recent Turkish governments against their large Kurdish minority. He is also worried by the harsh European criticism against continued Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus since 1974, which is a member of the EU, with no solution in sight. Any visitor to the Turkish-occupied part of the island faces the unpleasant facial expressions of the immigration officers when they recognize the Israeli passport, though one must say that they remained completely correct and courteous, perhaps hoping to make up in Famagusta what they lost in Israeli tourism in Antalya. And suddenly, Assad the righteous, who could do no wrong, in the heyday of Erdogan's courtship of that tyrant, became in the eyes of the chameleon-like Turkish prime minister "coward and cruel, like all the rest of them, and he will have

to account for his deeds after he is removed," as if he himself did not have a touch of their authoritarian rule. It would be interesting to speculate what he would have said, had the Syrians granted shelter to oppressed Kurds in Turkish territory, as he has permitted Syrian rebels into his land. In fact, such a situation had occurred previously, when the Syrians had given refuge to fugitive Turkish Kurdish leader Ocalan, and the Ankara government (that was before Erdogan) threatened to invade Syrian territory, and even concentrated forces on its border with Syria, which caused Damascus to back down immediately.

The penetration of al-Qa'ida and other terrorist movements into Syria, and during the American incursion in the 2000s from there to Iraq, under the leadership of its legendary chief Zarqawi, in the expectation to get their share from the devolving power amid the mounting chaos, is the issue that some responsible powers have been attempting to tackle, especially in view of the concrete danger that such irresponsible organizations, which do not bear any accountability toward the international community, may lay their hand on the mammoth stocks of unconventional weapons, especially the chemical, which are said to be the largest in the world under the Syrian regime. Such weapons, considered as the "nuclear power of the poor," do not even have to be used in practice to become a menace. Suffice if an organization or regime which claims to possess them threatens to use them for blackmail against any country or government, for the world order to collapse. After the US-Russian deal of 2013 to permit Syria to surrender to the international community its stock of chemical weapons, which had been used against Syrian rebels during the civil war, for the purpose of its destruction, questions are still being raised in the West about the extent of that stockpile which has been hidden by Syria and kept for doomsday use. It is ironical that the same al-Qa'ida, which was supported by Assad when its fighters ran away from the Americans in Iraq to seek refuge in Syria, had been the cause for the deterioration of Damascus' relationship with the United States, which also brought about the rupture of diplomatic ties between the two and even to an almost massive retaliation by President Bush against Damascus, and finally to a humiliating Syrian expulsion from Lebanon after three decades of occupation. But with Obama's disastrous policy of "engagement," which generated irreparable damage to American interests in the Middle East, the renewed relations with Assad let Hizbullah take over Lebanon, led to the abandonment of America's loyal ally

Mubarak, and permitted Iran to edge proudly and defiantly toward nuclear power. He met very adequately the definition that a neo-con is a liberal who is mugged by reality. He was so severely mugged that he was compelled to sever the relations with Syria and step up the sanctions and threaten military action against Iran, and has been trying to create a bridge to the Muslim Brothers, whom his predecessor had shunned so consistently.

But al-Qa'ida, as it proved previously in Somalia and Yemen, and after that in Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and North Africa, is skilled in penetrating countries and societies and is sure to position itself, under names like Jabhat al-Nusra, amid the Syrian chaos, in a situation to help determine the succession to Assad. In Iraq, where it played an important role during the American incursion (2003–12), its stature was reduced following the first elections and the apparent stabilization of the rule there. But in Yemen, in the Horn of Africa, and possibly in Syria and Libya, it did not say yet the last word, and the more uncontrollable the chaos becomes, the higher its opportunities to leave its mark on the permanent settlement in those countries. All this, assuming Syria emerges unified from the present trauma. But judging from the preparations being currently made by the Kurds, the Druze, and the Alawites to carve their own respective territories in case the country falls apart, there is no guarantee how this might end. The fear of the disintegration of Syria, despite the efforts to the contrary deployed by Russia, its patron in international fora and in arms supply, in order to cultivate it as one unified unit under its aegis and keep its naval base in Tartus, while President Putin is striving to return his country to its original *grandeur,* is not totally baseless. It is founded on the fact that Syria has historically been more of a geographic than a political unit, and its borders have expanded and shrunk to the whims of its rulers. Under the Ottoman Empire, Syria also included Palestine, Transjordan, and Lebanon and was known as "Greater Syria." Modern Syria has never renounced her ambition to return to her wider boundaries. But as Syria can expand, it can also shrink, namely having no credible social contract between its parts which can hold it together, who sense no great love lost between them; as we observe daily on our screens, there are enough centrifugal forces in the country which can precipitate such a division, unless its traditional authoritarian and compulsive government can be restored.

The Alawis, who constitute 12 percent of the population but have been imposing their tyrannical rule on the country for the past four decades and

who fear, for good reason, the wrath of revenge from the rest of the country if their government is toppled, may seek refuge in an enclave in the area of the seaport of Latakia, and dig in for a last stand. The Sunnites, who are most typically represented by the Muslim Brothers and their affiliates and who are disgusted by the dynastic rule of the Assads for the last four decades, will certainly be happy to rid themselves of the rule of the heretic Alawis and constitute a Muslim state, if they can overcome the many contradictions between the rural and less advanced population of the countryside, and the wealthier, more educated, and more bourgeois elites of the large cities of Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Der'a, Deir al-Zor, and any number of other urban centers whose names appear on our screens daily during the conflict. The Druze, who are already concentrated on the Druze Mountain, would probably wish to link up with their kin in Lebanon, Israel, and the Golan, while the Kurds in the Qamishli far north would certainly watch the fate of their brethren in adjoining Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, where they make up, in the aggregate, some thirty million strong, ethnically, and culturally committed national group, which seeks independence or at least some sort of autonomy. The many Christian denominations, whose survival has always depended on their incorporation into the state machinery (e.g., the slain minister of defense by the rebels in July 2012 was Christian), had *a priori* joined the "alliance of minorities" with the ruling Alawis, assuming that a minority would respect the rights of another. This assumption has not been proven beyond doubt under the Assads, because the ruling minorities always live under the fear that, when reversed, no one would rush to their defense. For if Syria is not kept together, then either new independent units can partition between them the vast Syrian territory, or they will resort to the much unstable and ineffective rule by quotas of next door Lebanon. The rapid conquest of northern and northeastern Syria by the IS forces under the aegis of the Islamic caliphate shows how easily and rapidly that chaotic country can be converted into a different entity.

No less worrisome has been the view from Israel: during most of the Assad reign, quiet has prevailed on their common border on the Golan since 1967, save for the short interlude of the 1973 war. The strong regime of the Assads, until its demise with the eruption of the Spring in early 2011, knew how to read the geopolitical map of the area and to realize that Damascus was only 40 km from the cease-fire border and reachable by Israeli artillery. Therefore it knew how to respect in minute detail the cease-fire with Israel.

There is no telling what a new regime, either based on autonomous units or in the hands of Muslim radicals like in Gaza, who embrace a policy not always consistent with logic or interest, might do or choose to act, which might draw it into a conflict it did not want or was not prepared for. Many of the rebels against Assad belong to the Brothers or al-Qa'ida, and judging from their war cries, "Allah Akbar," that were heard in almost all demonstrations by almost all groups of rebels, under shelling by the Syrian army, or rallying against the tyrant in massive gatherings in the cities, or urging foreign powers to come to their aid, or supplicating foreign correspondents to report their plight to the world, there can be no doubt where their hearts lies. Auguring ill were the additions to the signs carried by the demonstrators when Assad began to show signs of weakening and tumbling, with the inscriptions "Forward to Damascus and Jerusalem!" meaning that the rebellion was not only directed at the "Cruel, oppressive and murderous tyrant," whose grip on Damascus seemed to loosen up, but also against "Assad the traitor," who instead of directing his guns at Israel has been using them against his own people. One can conclude from that a pledge, that when they take over the rule, they would correct both wrongs: eliminate tyranny and revive the Golan front.

There will also be far-reaching international consequences to what is happening in Syria. First of all, the revival of the Russian position of old in the Middle East and the new stature that China has been acquiring thanks to her newly gained economic power and to her joint UN votings and vetoes which have so far obstructed harsh sanctions against Iran and Syria will both suffer a setback in case Assad falls. This, however, does not guarantee the rise in American prestige or a gain in its positions, if to replace the departed regime new fundamentalist powers come instead. The second most injured part will be Iran, as Syria under Assad was the main link which connected revolutionary Tehran with Hizbullah and constituted the pillar for the Shi'ite crescent that has been so much feared, suspected, mistrusted, and resented by the Sunnite world headed by Saudi Arabia. Syria has also been the bridge and the go-between to transmit Iran's directives to its most loyal and devoted agents of terror in the Middle East and the world—Nasrallah and his Hizbullah. Through Damascus, Hizbullah received his arms, money, and instructions, and the movement to and from Tehran to Beirut and back. In case this axis is severed, Hizbullah's future is much in doubt, and Tehran's link to Gaza will be much disrupted. With the inclusion of large

swathes of Syria in the Islamic State which is being fought by a coalition of the West and Sunni Arab countries which fear for their existing regimes, these processes might even be precipitated. Anticipating this, Hamas itself has evacuated its offices from Damascus as the security situation keeps worsening, but in case the regime there is replaced by a new administration, it will hasten to build alternative frameworks and networks of relations to fit the nature of the new regime, and the remaining terrorist movements who will still lodge in the Syrian capital will have to look for better shelters if the new regime decides to abandon the terrorist path. The new rule will also have to build new outreaches to the Arab world, to get out of their country's isolation, and perhaps weave new lines of communication and cooperation with the West, especially the United States.

Next door Lebanon, which will be relieved from the giant shadow of its dominating neighbor, which had directly occupied it for too long, and pulled the strings of its policies, domestic and external, for even longer, will have to work out new patterns of government to liberate itself from the violent grip of Hizbullah, once the latter's Syrian patron and protector has lost its influence and lowered its profile. And, above all, the powerful and concerned neighbor Israel, which for forty years (the period predicted by former Prime Minister Begin during the Lebanon War of 1982, of which more than thirty have already elapsed) has enjoyed peace and quiet on its borders on the Golan (though not entirely on the Lebanese border), may find itself suddenly threatened, either by another regime which will embrace a different agenda from its predecessor or be showered by missiles, with conventional or unconventional payloads, which may transform life within its borders and entice it to alter its retaliatory strategy.

It is noteworthy that when the danger of Assad's collapse became concrete as he approached the end of his fighting stamina, both Iranian and Arab spokesmen threatened an imminent Iranian reaction against Israel in the context of the Syrian crisis, which may have already begun with the terrorist attack in Bulgaria in July 2012, against an Israeli tour bus, which claimed six casualties. These spokesmen have underlined the connection between the situation in Syria and the Iranian nuclear debate, therefore Iran regarded itself committed to defend its ally due to its suspicion that Israel and Saudi Arabia collaborate in arming the Syrian opposition, which is dubbed by Assad and Iran as made of "terrorists," who are poised to topple the Syrian tyrant. Those spokesmen have warned lest rebellion spread to the

entire Middle East, bringing about the rupture of the Iranian–Syrian axis, thus harming Iran's geopolitical posture and irreparably damaging Hizbullah, which has become the joint long arm executive of both Tehran and Damascus, and the agent of both in Lebanon.

These spokesmen tend to believe that any Israeli attack on one of the partners of the Iran–Syria–Hizbullah axis, in the present power configuration around Syria, would produce an immediate combined counterattack of the three against Israel. In Nasrallah's speech on July 18, 2012, he reiterated that Israel was preparing a first strike against Lebanon, as it did on two previous occasions (1982 and 2006), but he boasted that Hizbullah was itself busy preparing a "great surprise" in retribution. Whether he referred to the Burgas (Bulgaria) terrorist operation, which was perpetrated on the same day but had been in the making long before, or to the long promised revenge for the killing of Imad Mughniayeh, his legendary chief of operations, in Damascus a few years earlier remains unclear. Either way, as the Western siege on Tehran was tightening, and due to Iran's inability to respond by any significant diplomatic countermeasure and to stop the tumbling process of its Syrian client and ally, it has no option left than to dispatch terrorist attacks against the West and Israel, without, however, admitting responsibility for them, in spite of the clear footprints that Hizbullah leaves behind as its agent for that kind of activity. This is apparently what happened in Bulgaria, but this does not preclude more attempts of this cowardly type, or of more spectacular import, in the weeks and months to come, in order to prevent or slow down the process of disintegration of the Damascus regime. At any rate, Hizbullah involvement in the Syrian fighting has constrained it in its sense of obligation to continue to harass Israel on the Lebanese front, in spite of the continuing bravado of Nasrallah against Israel. Even during the Israeli war in Gaza (July-August 2014), when the Hamas was desperate for aid from its allies to relieve it from overwhelming Israeli pressure, Hizbullah elected to remain quiet on the Israeli front, keeping in mind the devastation its previous provocations against Israel in 2006 had cost it and Lebanon.

This sort of convoluted strategy, which allows Iran to act without admitting it, also deflects world attention from its nuclear program and shifts the burden of proof, and the responsibility for the Syrian events, to the West, who is accused of both persecuting peaceful Iran and aiding the rebels in Syria, to create havoc by arming them, thus prolonging the strife

and increasing the bloodletting. This thinking is enthusiastically embraced by China and Russia, which lend to it international prominence by using it in the UN and other diplomatic arenas. This explains the series of terrorist attempts concocted against Israel and the West, which were fortunately scuttled thanks to efficient intelligence gathering and international coordination. The aborted terrorist operations in Azerbaijan, Thailand, India, and even against the Saudi Ambassador in Washington in the recent past and the "successful" operations in Kenya in June 2012, in Cyprus in July, and in Bulgaria again in July, on which Ahmadinejad commented, "we try all the time and sometimes we also succeed," referring to the murder of one Bulgarian and five Israeli innocent citizens as "success," are all cases in point. In all the documentation that was seized after the fact, the implementation was confided to Hizbullah. An authoritative hypothesis has been that the purpose of these acts has been to trigger a strong reaction by Israel against Hizbullah and/or Iran, something that would compel Tehran to launch an all-out war against Israel, amid its accusation of "provocation," thus causing the world to forget about the nuclearization program. Conversely, another estimate contends that Iran would not take the risk of total war that could cause most destruction and death in the country before it has had the chance to complete the project of the bomb, which could deter any attack against it in the future. But who knows what this irrational regime can do, if it is poised on war for ideological reasons? Things have shifted slightly after the advent of Rouhani to power in June 2013, assuming that his smiling campaign might facilitate a deal on the Iranian nuclear program with the six powers, which might bring Tehran to the threshold of the bomb, thus revolutionizing the power configuration of the entire region. These pro and con arguments also play out in the Syrian scene, where Iranian positions are increasingly threatened, and their implementation on the ground is seen as contingent upon Assad's longevity, since the red lines that Iran has drawn are connected to its direct involvement there, not only in terms of its strategic involvement but also in terms of its active participation in fighting on its various fronts.

Syrian commentators also emphasize that Iran has been committed to Assad's protection, and that any harm to him can trigger a regional conflagration in the Middle East. Both Iran and Syria have also demanded that Russia should stand against and constitute a counterweight to the Western insistence on Assad's departure. This sort of expectation has been

repeatedly stated by the Russian Foreign Ministry, whose heads have been very actively involved in monitoring and charting the diplomatic struggle on behalf of Damascus and Tehran. Syrian spokesmen, seconded by their Russian allies, have also warned the “new Ottomans,” that is, the Turks who have “betrayed” the Syrian cause that they had championed not long before, that they should not seek to apply to Syria their military involvement in Libya, and be drawn to a military intervention in response to Western manipulations against their own interests.

In a press conference in Tehran, where the Syrian ambassador also took part, Iranian spokesmen warned that an all-out conflict in Syria may turn into a world war and precipitate rebellions in Saudi Arabia and Jordan as well. It is obvious that being aware of Western sensitivity to those two bastions of its interests, the Iranians have elected to wave them as scarecrows in order to deter and prevent any idea of shipping massive troops into Syria, the way they had done into the Gulf two decades earlier when Iraq invaded Kuwait and threatened the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula. Not incidentally, Iran pulled its trump card that it uses whenever a threat of hostilities looms in the horizon, that is, “to eliminate the Zionist entity,” which they know the West would not let to pass. They perennially claim that Israel is under a permanent danger to the point of being of threatening the three regional powers: the Syrian regime, the Lebanese Resistance (Hizbullah), and the Hamas Resistance (Gaza). This means that if the Zionist regime or NATO dares to attack Syria, those three combined operational powers will direct their missiles to Israel and bring destruction upon it. Ali Akbar Velayati, Iran’s expert on foreign affairs, appeared before the Council of Experts of the regime on March 7, 2012, and described Syria as the “frontline of the Resistance” and determined that Israel has been the source of the pressures exerted on Syria, due to its concern about the developing changes in the regional balance of power. It was no coincidence that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei pulled that trump card again in early November 2014, when he advocated once again the extermination of Israel, the same week that his foreign minister was trying to iron out the nuclear agreement with Secretary Kerry in Oman. Not since the expiration of Ahmadinejad’s term of office in June 2013 have the newly smiling Iranian authorities used that card.

None other than Ayatollah Misbah Yazdi proclaimed on February 26, 2012, one year into the Syrian revolt, the importance of Damascus as the

bridge between Iran, Hizbullah, and the Palestinians, indicating the new direction of the Iranian order of strategic priorities, whereby Iran is seeking to preserve Assad's regime, not only for its own sake, since the collapse of an autocratic regime can seriously crack Iran's own autocracy, but as the essential link with the other members of the alliance who constantly hold Israel in check. Thus, Syria being merely the long arm of Iran in the frontline of the Middle East, whoever fights Damascus, either from within or without, *eo ipso* challenges Tehran itself. This explains the direct involvement of Iran in the Syrian fighting and killing, and also in its internal politics, which also affords it the opportunity to deflect world opinion from its nuclearization program, while energetically pursuing the program toward completion. And if in the process three hundred thousand Syrians die, the human prize should not justify the abandonment of that strategy. The Ayatollah also reminded the aid of his country to Hizbullah during the second Lebanese War in 2006, praised Syria for being the most loyal Arab country to the Islamic cause as represented by Iran, and dubbed the rest of them as "worse than unbelievers," as they join the West in order to strike Syria, and thereby also Iran. Already in October 2011, at the height of the Syrian uprising, one of the leaders of Iran, Muhsin Razai, stated to the *Manar* network that any harm to the triangular thread, Syria-Hizbullah-Hamas, constitutes for Iran a red line, since they form the Islamic front against Israel, that it will not permit anyone to touch. This sounds like *casus belli*, and the only question that remains, as in other contexts, is whether Iran is capable to carry out its commitments when the chips are down and the hour of crisis comes. Interestingly enough, after the long years of enmity and sanction between the United States and Iran, the two countries found themselves facing the same enemy in Syria—ISIS—each for its own reasons, and there was concern in some Middle East capitals that Iran might extricate some concessions from the United States on the nuclear front in exchange for its support to the anti-IS coalition, although the Iranians wish to sustain Assad and the Americans are committed to remove him from power.

Whatever the speculations about whether and when the Syrian uprisings would enter their critical phase, plans for the post-Spring period in Syria have been revealed by all sorts of parties. For example, according to one source,[4] Syria's rebels distributed on July 30, 2012, a "national salvation draft" proposal for a political transition in the country, bringing together

military and civilian figures for a post-Bashar Al-Assad phase. The draft by the joint command of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) proposed the establishment of a higher defense council charged with creating a presidential council, which in turn would bring together a total of six military and civilian figures to lead a future transition. The proposal "meets all the revolution's demands," said the umbrella Military Council Joint Command, based in the flashpoint city of Homs. The transition-phase higher defense council should include "all Military Council leaders in Syria's cities and provinces, as well as all the high-profile defected officers and others who have contributed to the revolution," the Joint Command statement said. Among the proposed presidential council's responsibilities would be "to put forward draft laws for referendum and (. . .) to restructure the security and military apparatus," the statement said.

At the same time, another source revealed[5] that Arab Islamic fighters were eager to join Syria rebels, as the expression of a small but growing influx of militant Arab Islamic fighters, joining the fight against President Bashar Assad, a trend that seems to indicate the possible direction of Islam that post-Assad Syria might take, just like Egypt after Mubarak, Tunisia in the wake of Ben Ali's removal from power, and more recently Libya after Qaddafi. A case in point is Abdullah Ben Shamar, a Saudi student, who put a small copy of the Qur'an among his few belongings packed neatly in a holdall, as he prepared to set off with a Libyan friend across the hilly terrain separating southern Turkey from Syria. "It is our duty to go to the great *BiladAlShams* [Syria] and defend it against the Alawite tyrants massacring its people," said Shamar, twenty-two, a lightly bearded engineering major, who spoke to *Reuters* in Reyhanli, a Turkish town whose Arab inhabitants have historic links with Syria. He and his friend are part of a small but growing influx of militant Arab Islamists determined to join the eighteen-month-old rebellion against President Bashar Assad. Their presence will alarm those in the West who have warned against Al-Qa'ida-style militancy in Syria, whose conflict has the potential to spread sectarian strife far beyond its borders. Ben Shamar and his Libyan friend Salloum say they are following the footsteps of their ancestors who fought in legions sent by the Prophet Muhammed at the dawn of Islam to liberate Greater Syria from those they regarded as Byzantine heathens. Syria's twenty-first-century heathens, they say, are Assad and his cohorts in the ruling elite from the minority Alawite sect, a remote offshoot of Shi'ite Islam, no longer

considered Muslim by the Sunnites, that has dominated the power structure of Syria for the last five decades.

Sunni radical Muslims, such as the foreign fighters now making their way to Syria, entertain a deep hatred for Assad's Alawites, whom they regard as infidels, as well as for Shi'ite Iran, which backs the Syrian leader. "Syria's Muslim population has finally risen, after Assad and the Alawites pillaged Syria with the support of Iran and Hizbullah. Muslims everywhere cannot stand aside and do nothing to help the revolt," Shamar said. The two young middle-class Arab youths, who first met in the British town of Brighton several years before while attending a language course, arrived in Turkey in July 2012. They sensed a landmark change in the course of the revolt after the assassination of four of Assad's top lieutenants in Damascus on July 18, an event that encouraged bolder rebel attacks in Damascus and Aleppo, the country's commercial hub. In the following months, a steady flow of Arab men, including Libyans, Kuwaitis, Saudis as well as Muslims from Britain, Belgium, and the United States, have joined FSA forces, several rebel commanders in the northwest of Syria said. They are forming what opposition sources describe as an accelerated, but still small, inflow of foreign fighters into the country. They include young Syrians who were born in the West and whose families fled persecution under Assad's rule. Most have headed to the province of Hama, in central Syria, where a few jihadists, or Muslim religious fighters, with experience in Afghanistan, have been giving them rudimentary training in handling assault rifles and guerrilla warfare.

Hundreds of foreign jihadists, opposition sources say, now operate in the city of Hama, a major center of the anti-Assad rebellion and a veteran of the previous anti-Hafez Assad uprising in 1982 which had cost over twenty thousand lives. Some have gone to fight in Damascus, but their numbers are too small to alter the balance of power overwhelmingly in favor of Assad's forces, rebel sources said. Several reported massacres of Sunni villagers and the bombardment of mosques are fuelling the hatred of the Alawites that has prompted some Sunni scholars to start preaching in support of jihad, or holy struggle, in Syria. A Western diplomat following the movement of foreign fighters to Syria likened them to the European idealists who headed to Spain in 1936 to help fight against General Francisco Franco, but were ultimately no match for the dictator's forces. Salloum said he had fought with Libyan rebels a year earlier in the battle of Zawiya, near Tripoli, before

the fall of Muammar Qaddafi. He declined to disclose where he was going in Syria, but said it was his religious duty to help Syrians in need. “Our Syrian brothers need any help they can get, because unlike in Libya, the international community has abandoned them. They welcome us and are eagerly waiting for us. We want to tell them: ‘you are not alone in this fight to liberate this land from the tyranny of the minority,’” said Salloum, who claimed he had dropped out of Libya’s Tripoli University, where he was studying chemistry. Salloum, who planned to join a unit called the *Ahrar Al Sham* (Syria Freedom Fighters) brigades, said participating in jihad was one of his highest aspirations as a Muslim. Rebel sources said most of the foreign fighters had joined this unit, including Mohammed Salem Al Harbi, a young Saudi cleric who is believed to have been killed in the battles in July and had triumphantly cried out: “Victory comes from Allah!” In a curious and rapid development that stemmed from the long impasse in Syria, part of the Qa’ida fighters joined Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a self-declared Iraqi cleric who announced in mid-2014 the foundation of his Islamic State under his caliphate that extended to Iraq and the liberated parts of Syria.

The helpless international and inter-Arab forces, which have now been preoccupied by the new eruption of anti-Western hatred triggered (but not caused) by that silly film against the Prophet, which should have been dismissed and not given so much attention in the first place, have apparently raised their hands in despair about the Syrian situation, and once again left it to individual and organized jihadis to deliver the *coup de grace* to Assad. The UN, following the withdrawal of Kofi Annan, and the Arab League and UN observers’ failure to produce a cease-fire, has appointed a new mediator, veteran official Lakhdar Brahimi, to try his land. But after a meeting with Assad he declared that he could not see a way to resolve the conflict which posed a threat to the entire area and the world, in view of the many and various Arab, Muslim, and international actors meddling in it. The choice of Brahimi, as of Annan, made by a secretary general who himself grew up in a background of authoritarian regimes, is not perhaps the best choice, because if they wish to democratize the system, to replace the tyrannical rule of Assad, they need someone who was nourished on a democratic tradition: a Swede, a Briton, or a Dutch. Failing that, any mediator has to understand that, unlike homogeneous Tunisia and Egypt, where the departure of the ruler constituted the beginning of a solution, in

Syria the removal of the dictator would only signal the beginning of a long and bloody civil war.

Yemen is perhaps the most unfortunate and miserable Spring country. Its location in the Arabian Peninsula, its proximity to Saudi Arabia, and its position on the strategic straits which lead from the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea in the east to the Red Sea in the west, facing Somalia and Djibouti on the Horn of Africa and dominating the vital Bab-el-Mandeb and the Socotra island, turn it into a coveted base by both the Powers on the one hand and their nemesis—al-Qa'ida and other Muslim terrorists and jihad fighters—on the other. Yemen has been the only country in the Peninsula so far which has altered its monarchic system into a republican one, which is perhaps the reason that it has been the only one that was deeply hit by the Spring so far. Its change of political system, which was effected half a century ago, did not produce, however, any liberalization, an argument used by the monarchies in the Gulf to claim that toppling the monarchies does not necessarily produce democracies. In fact one may claim with some merit that some of those monarchies, like Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman, are in fact more benevolent than the Yemenite tribal autocracy, on the one hand, and the autocratic republics of Iraq, Syria, Libya, and the rest did not bring salvation to their peoples either, on the other hand.

After half a century of various experiments in all these regimes, the Spring appears as a new promise. But in Yemen, which has been plagued by dictatorship, poverty, backwardness, tribalism, and religious division, the prolonged conflicts between the various components of the country, like for instance the Sunnite majority with the Zaydi (a branch of the Shi'a) Houthis, the entrenchment in place of various radical groups and fundamentalist Muslim leaders, and the direct involvement of local and regional powers in the affairs of the state, like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, opposing each other in the 1960s, and Iran currently, tear the country apart. Moreover, al-Qa'ida, which has been seeking strategic but remote areas to shelter itself since its expulsion from Afghanistan by the Americans, in order to hit its enemies but escape retaliation, has been seeking new bases all the time, like East Africa where it previously blew up the American Embassies in Nairobi and Dar al Salam, and now in Sinai where it has constituted a terrorist threat for both Israelis and Egyptians. We recall that in 2000, al-Qa'ida in Yemen caused a heavy damage to the American Warship *"Cole"* in Aden seaport and high casualties. Aden was the capital

of South Yemen, which had received its independence from Britain in 1967 and united in 1990 with the north with its capital San'a, which had become independent from the Ottomans in 1918, under the aegis of dictator Abdullah Ali Saleh who was supported, like Mubarak, by the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The eruption of the Spring in Tunisia and then in Egypt was soon to be followed in San'a and then in the rest of Yemen, where the most pressing demand was the removal of the decades-lasting dictator, who had also started grooming his son for the job. But the other most immediate themes of the demonstrations were the elimination of corruption and unemployment in the face of the increasing population, the shrinking economy, the decreasing supply of water after long years of drought, and the poor development of alternative water sources. There were also talks of a new constitution, as though new words would change any reality. At the outset, Saleh tried to quell the uprising by force as has been his and other dictators' wont, but after he was bombed and wounded within his own presidential palace, he was compelled to resign, and his vice president, al-Hadi, took up the rule in February 2012. The recurrent pattern was there also, of a pledge of a new constitution, new elections, and a provisional government to prepare and supervise the new election in 2014, presidential elections, and the completion of the new constitution. As in other places, the transition period will be the most problematic, because one cannot predict what part of and for how long would the old elements of the revolved Saleh regime hold on, nor by whom, how, and when they would be removed, as Mursi has courageously and firmly done in Egypt. It is also hard to predict who among them will continue to influence the new regime from the outside, nor what would be entered into the new constitution.

An impression has been created in all these places where the Spring has raged that the main rage has been channeled to the old regimes who are required to depart, as if it were a personal, not a systemic or structural, shortcoming that the demonstrators wished to mend. Thus have departed Mubarak, Ben Ali, Saleh, to be followed by Assad, while not much has changed there until the advent of Mursi in Egypt. In Yemen too, due to the old structures of the tribal society, much time will elapse before a generally accepted rule rises in San'a. In the meantime, a Shi'ite Houthi uprising, supported by Iran, has been raging, with Saudi Arabia doing its best to aid the Yemenites to quell it lest it spreads to their territory. Into these widening

cracks, al-Qa'ida, who has specialized in subversion and maintains its Arabian branch in the country (AQAP), has no difficulty to penetrate, after it had decentralized into separated regional commands in North Africa, Europe, America, and Asia following the American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. But it is also true that even in its Yemenite hideouts the American long arm, in drones and secret operations, reaches it and is able to eliminate its chief operatives, like Yemenite-American Sheikh al-Awlaki.

Saudi Arabia, the most susceptible to be impacted by events in neighboring Yemen, has been cultivating its direct links with the various tribal groupings there, over the head of the official government ties, *inter alia* by providing employment to thousands of impoverished Yemenites to its south. Already in 1989, Yemen had established, together with Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt, the "Arab Council for Cooperation" (ACC), which was to counter the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in order to speed up economic exchange between the member countries, but those days were still Saddam's days, when he still licked his wounds from the eight-year devastating war with Iran (1980–88), and this new flimsy organization, like so many "unions" in the Arab world that had come and gone, was geared to help him maintain the Arab front which had supported him for the duration of the war, and was dismantled as soon as he invaded Kuwait in 1990. But one has to recall that due to Aden's independence in 1967, and the creation in its territory of the "Popular Democratic Republic of South Yemen," it became a client of the Soviet Union in the height of the Cold War, something which triggered tensions and clashes with neighboring Saudi Arabia; supported the rebels of Dhufar against the Sultan of Oman; and even voted in the UN and the Arab League against admitting in both the new Gulf monarchies that had just been released from British rule. Only when South Yemen united with the North in 1990, which happened with the collapse of the Soviet Union, there occurred a sea change in the alienation of that region from the rest of the Arabs and the West.

But Ali Abdullah Saleh, who ruled united Yemen, had become an ally of Saddam Hussein and was alone in supporting Iraq's invasion to Kuwait in 1990, which provoked the cooling of his relations with the West, generated a reduction in their aid programs to him, and even caused the expulsion of one million Yemenite (and Palestinian, for the same reason) workers from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, which were the providers of much of both economies. The deterioration of the relationship was so bad that Saudi

Arabia began erecting a real wall to prevent the penetration of Yemenite people and goods into its territory. Even after the Americans liberated Kuwait, Saleh persisted in his close relations with Saddam, which blocked him from returning to the Arab mainstream. Only from 1994 on did Saleh's efforts to return to the rich Arab countries' lap reap fruit, and his border with the Saudis was recognized and marked. This process of repentance, which is characteristic of inter-Arab relations which keep shifting here and there like desert sands, according to changing whims or needs or necessity, reached its climax in summer 2000, when San'a and Riyadh signed a border agreement between themselves, which finally settled the half-century-old disagreements between them.

One of the major problems in this chaotic and ungovernable country has been the kidnapping of foreign tourists by tribal groups who make a "living" on levied ransom, as they probably learned from their neighbors in Somalia who do the same with maritime piracy. In June 2009, for example, nine foreign nationals were kidnapped near the town of Sa'da, seven of whom were killed and only two rescued. Due to the proximity in religion, customs, and commercial relations, the two countries have developed much cooperation in their illicit occupation. The Somalis, who brought many Somali refugees to impoverished Yemen, have elected to find some sort of shelter there, though leaving much to be desired, than to go overland to neighboring Ethiopia or Eritrea where the situation is even hungrier and worse. In 2007, there were already one hundred thousand Somali refugees in Yemen, in addition to the more than seven hundred thousand Somalis who reside there permanently, with many of them marrying local Yemenites, something which has complicated even further the tribal system reigning there, through deteriorating impoverishment and involvement in international terrorism.

The domestic war between various Yemenite forces, who find it impossible to control a vast area larger than France, but not nearly as developed, which has been going on between Sunnites and Shi'ites since 2004, has seeped into the Saudi territory also and dragged in its wake not only Saudi Arabia, but also Iran, Jordan, and Egypt. Thousands of civilians who are caught in the crossfire flee, while the others are equipped, as in other tribal countries, with millions of illegal weapons, more than even Libya, and suffer from the same tribal syndrome of the need to defend themselves, in a country where security, national and personal, leaves much

to be desired. No wonder then that in this situation, individuals, families, and clans wish to seek survival in their most elemental level, even if we leave apart the philosophical level of public debates, as is done in Egypt, on the nature of the regime, the state relations with religion, military and civilian rule, the state budget, the people's needs, and the like. The unrest and frequent uprisings in South Yemen, in the mountains and deserts which surround Aden, where the Americans show interest in holding on to their naval base, add additional significance and urgency to the general will for change which erupted with the Spring elsewhere. The current American activity too, especially through their deadly drones, and sometimes via their cruise missiles, against positions and individuals involved in international terrorism, especially in the San'a and Abyan areas, instead of being welcomed by the population who seek security and tranquility, is on the contrary loathingly rejected by the Muslim fundamentalists and their supporters. The latter, like in Afghanistan and Pakistan, are much more inclined to expel the "foreign invaders" and "aggressors" from their land, than to enjoy the little security that they can provide in exchange for the heavy price of inflicting civilian "collateral casualties" who are usually not part of this conflict.

Until the new constitution has been written and the new elections held, as promised, in 2014, the new provisional government, like its predecessor just removed, hardly continues to control the cities, while the countryside all lies beyond its reach and is ruled by tribal/armed groups whose area of "jurisdiction" has been widened during the Spring, when its main concern had been not to render its rule more efficient and to bring remedy to its people, but just like everybody else, to survive together with the ruler's family and entourage. Two unruly groups of this kind emerged on the ground, and they are sure to demand their share should matters settle down permanently. The one is *Ansar al-Shari'a* (the Supporters of Shari'a), whose very name indicates the Islamic tendencies of its followers, and is considered a branch of al-Qa'ida of AQAP, and the second are the Houthi Shi'ites who have been up in rebellion in the mountains. Already during their Spring uprising, and especially after it, these groups and their peers have announced the establishment of several "Islamic Emirates" in the southern provinces of Abyan and Shabwa, and the northern province of Sa'da, which, as in Afghanistan, have escaped official control and intend to make that situation permanent. In the north, the Houthis have conducted

their rebellion against the Sunni authorities since 2004, without any force, including Saudi intervention, being able to quell it. In Afghanistan, the same has been unfolding since the American invasion in 2001, where the defeated Taliban (militarily but not in spirit) declared an Islamic Emirate headed by the Taliban, managed by their own fighters in the battle zones, and reached a concrete and firm grip on vast parts of the land to which the Americans have no real access. In Yemen, as in Afghanistan, the moment the Americans depart, and the local government troops are no longer subordinated to them, it stands to reason that all the infrastructures erected by these groups in the areas of the Emirates will become the nuclei of the alternative rule. It is hard to envisage how democratic elections or a new constitution can be implemented in these regions, even if achieved and agreed upon, because under the scenario of the Emirates, they will be by then popular and recognized enough on the ground, and will have extended their rule on a wide enough area of the country, as to become the actual power. The enmity is well established between the Sunnite al-Qa'ida, the product of puritanical and Wahhabi Saudi Arabia, which now rejects it since it turned its terrorist arms against it, and the Shi'a which is often dubbed by critical Sunnite clerics as "heretics, worse than Jews."

If one assumes that any change in Yemen will have to take as a launching pad the current institutional make-up, which has never been popular, effective, or incorrupt, and had never assembled around it any kind of consensus, the planners of the alternative regime, if it could be brought about, will have to take into account what had been until the insurrection. One has the impression that revolutionary passion, which elsewhere would have wanted first to get rid of the tyrants before anything else could be done, without a priori thinking about alternatives, or planning them until the process of the revolt had succeeded, in the Yemen things have been so decentralized and large tracts of the country in rebellion, and tribal interests so different and even contradictory to each other, that beyond throwing out the loathed tyrant, no one dared think about alternatives in a centralized government beyond the local Emirates that were there already on in the process of emerging when the Spring was launched. They did not ponder the issue of creating a new regime based on a new vision for the country, but wished to rid themselves of the ruler and his American sponsors in order to exhaust the authorities which had fought against them, with American aid, thereby reinforcing their private emirates without outside

disturbance. It is doubtful whether any of them shows any humanitarian or political concern for the people of Yemen, except perhaps some intellectuals and urban political leaders who know the ancient Yemenite tradition and wish to revive it in a tranquil and civil ambience.

What there is now is a nominally republican regime which replaced the obscurantist rule of the imam in the 1960s. The Republic rests on a bicameral house of the Parliament with 301 members, accompanied by a *Shura* (upper house) of 111 members. In theory, the rule is partitioned between the president who heads the state and the prime minister, but in practice the authoritarian rule of the president has taken over the affairs of the state, and the rest obey and rubber-stamp his fiat. There was a constitution which was updated in 1991 and determined that the president was to be elected by popular vote out of at least two candidates, each supported by at least fifteen MPs. This is on paper a great advance compared to Egypt, for example, when it was prohibited to submit more than one candidate, lest "differences" and arguments came to cloud the happy event of unanimous vote of 90 percent or more, which was expected to be cast in his favor. In view of the appointment of the prime minister by the president, as in Egypt, the entire executive branch was built into the hands of the president so as to make him a dictator that so many, during the Islamic Spring, throughout the Islamic world, wished to remove him from power, even if nothing else. The main party in power in Yemen, the General Popular Congress, the party of the president, again as in Mubarak's case, always saw to a majority in Parliament, so as to assure the passing of all the president's orders as law, in order to lend legitimacy to the dictatorship of Saleh. This is what the rebels precisely wish to prevent from recurring, if the system is ever amended. This is the claim of all rebels of the Spring: to put an end to the unlimited powers of the tyrant, to be replaced by "democracy."

Prima facie, as in the other Spring countries, all the components of dictatorship are here and all the elements of a needed reform are here. But, unlike countries with high governability, as Egypt or one of the monarchies, where institutional experience has been accumulated to serve a base for amendments, reform, additions, and innovations, in chaotic Yemen, tranquility never reigned, and the dictator never controlled all elements of power in the entire country, and when and where government worked, it has been only partially, only in select places, like the capital and a few urban

centers, which are open and accessible to all. In this situation, no legal precedent, no exemplary rule, and no pattern to learn from were established to guide the generations of past rulers. Take, for example, the standards set by the existing constitution regarding the unification of the two codes of law existing in the two parts of the country (north and south) into one system. The system includes in theory commercial courts and a supreme court seating in San'a, the capital. But unlike the Egyptian legal system, where cases of violations against the regime were dealt with and perpetrators convicted, although judges were not usually courageous enough to confront the supreme ruler of the country in questions of human rights, there were no such legal cases in Yemen worth noticing. The constitution said that the source of law is rooted in the *Shari'a*, and *qadis* (religious judges) often sat in courts of law and dealt with many cases according to religious law, but civil lawyers could have as well treated the issue at hand based on civil law. Thus, if in Yemen, as in other places, Muslim fundamentalists take over the rule, the legal system would have to adapt to the religious one, for dearth of precedents and an established legal tradition, whereas in Egypt, despite the many deficiencies, a long tradition is there, at least in theory, which cannot be dismissed out of hand. For there is a long (though incomplete and not tightproof) experience which prevented the religious courts from encroaching upon the authority of the civil courts.

In October 2014, the Houthi Shi'ites, who had been in a long-term rebellion in northern Yemen since the beginning of the Arab Spring, against the devolving central regime of San'a, made great strides toward the capital of San'a, supported by Iran, and have taken over San'a in November 2014, exposing them to face the other emirates. The situation is getting more complicated, because the Saudis and the other Gulf emirates, who had no choice but to contain the Shi'ite rebellion on their borders for the past few years, are today facing the prospect of seeing a Shi'ite rule taking over in Yemen, and adding to the already tense relations between Riyadh and Tehran. Since about half the population is Zaydi, a moderate sect of Shi'ism, it is understood how the Houthis succeeded so rapidly and so sweepingly to take over much of the country. Interestingly, the claim to rule is demonstrated by an actual capacity to rule. According to Zaydi tradition, a Zaydi dynasty had ruled Yemen from the tenth century until its removal by Colonel Sallal, aided by the Egyptian troops, who helped the republicans

to win over the royalists in 1962. At any rate, the Arab Gulf states are now open to a double front of combat: on the one hand the Shi'ite imminent threat, and on the other hand the Arabian Peninsula branch of al-Qa'ida which is inimical to both.

From time to time, some of the infighting among these radical groups comes to light, not only about ideology and its praxis, but also about turf and clashes of personalities. For example, Al-Qa'ida's branch in Yemen publicly denounced the IS group and declared its self-proclaimed caliphate illegitimate in a video released in November 2014, exactly as had done the 120 eminent scholars of Sunni Islam who had delegitimized the caliphate on the grounds that it had not been declared by competent doctors of the Holy Law. Besides, a senior al-Qa'ida leader condemned his militant competitors of ISIS for "driving a wedge" in the ranks of the global *Mujahideen.* "We do not see the authenticity of the establishment of such a caliphate, nor what follows it of consequences," said a senior member of the group's Shari'ah council, Sheikh Harith al-Nadhari, as quoted by ABC News. "This war was and still is a Crusader war against all the honest *mujahedeen,"* Nadhari said, according to *Long War Journal.* "We took the position incumbent upon us to support our brothers with what we can, and we still hold to that position, as we believe in the necessity to support our *mujahedeen* brothers, including all of their groups and entities, regardless of their inclinations." But despite this fundamental need to unite against the West, Nadhari denounced ISIS for demanding allegiance from Muslims. Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula is one of the biggest and most powerful branches of the terror organization. It also wrote one of the most detailed documents teaching fighters how to wage jihad. Al-Qa'ida in Yemen is considered to be a great threat to America and is consistently targeted by US drone attacks. In Yemen, this militant group is currently battling the Shi'ite Houti rebels, who recently seized the capital San'a. An enormous wall poster was seen in San'a denouncing America for its drones which indiscriminately bomb civilian populations, with a boy crying out, "Why did you kill my family?" That boy was certainly a candidate to be recruited to al-Qa'ida at some point.[6]

A nearly half-hour video may have been a response to ISIS caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's most recent audio message, where he announced the expansion of his caliphate to al-Qa'ida's strongholds in Libya and Yemen and "revoked the legitimacy" of other groups, without consulting them. A

decade before ISIS came under Baghdadi's leadership, it had been born as al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia (Iraq) and was led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who launched his group with a videotaped beheading, just like ISIS would do later. Two years later, al-Zarqawi was killed in a US air strike in Iraq and months later the group evolved into the Islamic State in Iraq, led by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was appointed in 2010, when the group was going through a rough patch, and in 2013 he aligned with al-Qa'ida's Syrian branch, *Jabhat al-Nusra*, and rebranded the group as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Less than a year later, al-Qa'ida central had had enough of ISIS and Baghdadi, and its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri said al-Nusra was its only branch in Syria. But despite al-Qa'ida central's divorce from ISIS, AQAP in Yemen had originally said it supported Baghdadi's group in the battle against "the Crusaders." But now, it seems it has altered its choices.

Jabhat al-Nusra

Literally “the Front of Victory,” it has been directly linked to al-Qa’ida. It began in Syria in 2011 and has been listed as a terrorist organization by many governments. Although it was recognizable on the ground when the Syrian civil war started, as a rebellion against the Assad government in 2011, it was not until June 2013 that it was listed as a terrorist organization. In some Western countries like Australia, the organization came to the attention of public opinion when local Muslim individuals were arrested for collecting funds for that organization and/or trying to recruit fighters to travel to Syria or to travel there themselves. The genesis of the activity of the group as a separate organization began when al-Qa’ida in Iraq dispatched the first cadres of the group to fight against the Assad regime once it became clear that the uprising against him did not comprise mere disturbances as part of the Arab Spring, but a swelling rebellion made out of many diversified groups, intent on removing the Assad dynasty from power. What distinguished the Jabhat nonetheless was that its salafist essence also necessitated the expulsion of the Christians from the country. The large Christian minority in Syria, made up of many sub-denominations, had been incorporated into the Syrian hierarchy headed by Assad’s Alawites in what came to be known as “the Alliance of the Minorities,” which meant that the otherwise looked-down upon Christians in this Sunni majority country had a high state in maintaining the rule of the Alawites, which alone guaranteed their own political survival and social access to the ranks of the elites, especially in military, politics, and economy.

Jabhat al-Nusra has released videos of its attacks and operations through its media network *al-Manara al-Bayda* (the White Minaret) through which we learn that the group aims to establish an Islamic Shari’a state, or caliphate, across the eastern Mediterranean area, otherwise known as the Levant, which includes Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and part of southern Turkey. The group became notorious through several terrorist actions. On February 21, 2013, multiple vehicle suicide bombings in Damascus killed between fifty and hundred people. On the same day, a triple vehicle bombing was perpetrated in northern Damascus that killed twenty-two people. On January 2, 2013, a “suicide” vehicle bombing targeting the Syrian Military Intelligence headquarters in Damascus, Syria,

killed fifty-three people. On November 5, 2012, a suicide vehicle bombing in Hama, Syria, killed at least fifty people.

Even though the *Jabhat* and the IS were originally affiliates of al-Qa'ida, both were Sunni based in their ideology, fanatic extremist in their means and widely popular in their appeal to the Islamic world; moreover, even though the Islamic State began as a subordinate to Jabhat al-Nusra in early 2011, IS emerged eventually as the more potent, visionary, goal-oriented, and effective tool of Islamic domination. An Australian terrorist expert, Professor Clive Williams from the Australian National University, even claims the two groups were no longer similar in their ideologies or aims. He detected several growing differences between them:

1. The *Jabhat al-Nusra* and Islamic State fight were seen occasionally fighting against each other while the Islamic State has been trying to take over the al-Nusra front, like "the *Golem* has risen against its maker."
2. The Nusra remains aligned with al-Qa'ida, whereas Islamic State has been cut off by al-Qa'ida because of its brutality and its acts against civilians (as if Bin Laden and his gang had not committed September 11 and other horrors; maybe it is more correct to claim that it is the IS horrors against other Muslims which have enraged al-Qa'ida, not their cruelty against unbelievers).
3. Professor Williams also said there were around "100 or so active sympathisers" of Islamic State in Australia. Sixty of them have had their passports withheld.[7]

The Muslim Brothers and Their Sister Organizations

The Muslim Brothers, founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, grew by leaps and bounds during the 1930s and 1940s during their association with the Nazis, including in the German attempt to annihilate the Jews of Europe. After the war, while they concentrated their struggle against the British, who occupied the Suez Canal, and against the Zionists in Palestine, they began to implant their cells in Europe and America, to the point that today there is almost no Muslim population in the West where the Brothers did not take root. So much so that far from the initial practice of the Brothers to maintain some secrecy in the general public until entrenched in

the populace, today many Muslim groups in the West boast their affiliation to what has become a worldwide organization, committed to the practice of Shari'a law domestically in the countries of residence and to a world caliphate externally.

Of course, the story of the Brothers is long and we don't need to narrate all that intricate and fascinating tale. Suffice it to record here that the Muslim Brotherhood was created in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, who had many refreshing ideas that he introduced into Islam. He did not generate or invent Islam, but he updated it, so to speak. For example, he added to the Islamic usage two or three major terms, which injected perhaps a new life into the very operation of modern Islam. He addressed for example *jihad*, the holy war, which had been taken before by many Muslims around the world, as a striving, as an aspiration to be a better Muslim. That's precisely what it means, for *jihad* means aspiration, self-strengthening, or making an effort, which can also be intellectual, not necessarily military. But now Hassan al-Banna said that, as of old, "*jihad is* an instrument in order to battle against the enemy." The problem is to identify who the enemy is. And the enemy is, he said, first of all the British who were occupying Egypt, and second the Jews who were coming to colonize Palestine and who are battling against the local Arabs, Muslims, Palestinians for the same land, and therefore Muslims are duty-bound to help the Palestinians against the Jews. And the second revived term was *shahid* or martyr. He said that whenever a Muslim dies in this battle of jihad, it's not just death as one is killed in other combats or circumstances. This is the death of a martyr, and then one is assured to go straight to paradise, and therefore not only were people who volunteered for the Muslim Brothers not afraid to die, they were eager to martyrize themselves in battle for the cause of Islam and in the Path of Allah, and so take the shortcut from this tormenting life into eternal paradise in the entourage of Allah.

When Hassan al-Banna spoke on those terms, he revived a terminology which had not been operational since medieval times, when Islam was great and victorious and used jihad to expand and vanquish its enemies. He was impressing upon the Muslims of Egypt that "We are under obligation to help other Muslims," that is to say those in Palestine, and not only to wage *jihad* against the Jews and the British, but also not to be afraid to die, because those who die in this combat are assured of their second life in

Heaven, in the afterworld. Now one can understand how the Nazi Germans picked up the same ideas realizing that this was the great occasion they were looking for, namely quite a great opportunity to penetrate the Islamic world on common terms, that is to create in Egypt an office for propaganda, for their own cause. Previously, the Egyptian population rejected that propaganda of hatred, because they had reasonably good relations with the Jews who had lived there for many centuries. There were some eighty thousand of them in Egypt then. There was even a very famous trial, when the Germans published in French an anti-semitic book by their Nazi office in Cairo, speaking about the threat the Jews posed to Germany. They used Nazi propaganda to warn the Arabs that "Jews are not only a threat against Europe or against Germans, the Aryans, but are also a threat against you." And Jews in Egypt sued that Nazi office in Cairo and they won the case. And therefore the whole idea was dismissed by public opinion, showing how Egypt was ill-prepared for a negative anti-semitic propaganda attitude toward the Jews at that time. But here the propaganda machine of the Nazis in Egypt and later on in Palestine, together with the Muslim Brothers in Egypt since the 1930s, combined with the efforts of the mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, simply changed attitudes in the Middle East toward the Palestine and Jewish problems, whose consequences we suffer to this very day. The Germans, who understood exactly what it was all about, jumped at the opportunity to tell the Arabs, and Muslims in general, that as a matter of fact both Germans and Muslims shared a common ideology. Both of them wanted to eliminate Jews, for both of them thought that Jews were treacherous in character, and so on; therefore, it was only natural for them to join their efforts and to collaborate in their elimination.

Against this background, we can understand that as soon as the world war broke out, the mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, was invited to Berlin. He established, together with sixty more Arabs and other Muslim broadcasters and translators, a broadcasting service, which operated from Berlin until the very end of the war. And in the middle of the war, when more and more German divisions were needed for the eastern front, when Stalingrad went awry, and the whole situation in the war front started to deteriorate, the Germans became very short on manpower, and therefore they resorted to the thirty-eight divisions of *Waffen-SS* that they recruited to fill the ranks. *Waffen* means armed, the armed SS. The SS was created initially as a police unit, some kind of elite unit, and later they were needed

for battles, for selected battles. Therefore their numbers and their tasks expanded from three battalions of police at the very beginning, into thirty-eight divisions of fighting troops at the end of the war. Most of them were German, but since they ran short of recruits they started to enlist others: Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Romanians, and also Yugoslavs and Albanians, and so on. So, the concerned Nazis flew especially the mufti of Jerusalem—who was settled in Berlin—to Bosnia, with the task to convince the Muslim population there of his newly adopted militant Muslim Brother ideology, which he had adopted as a tool to achieve his goals in Palestine, and which prescribed that it was good to fight against the Jews who deserved elimination, and the British because they supported the Jews, and that if one fought that war, it would be considered *jihad,* and any casualty would be regarded as a martyr, hence his automatic salvation is guaranteed to eternity when he goes to Heaven to dwell in the vicinity of Allah. The mufti went from place to place in the large Muslim agglomerations of Bosnia, especially the cities where in 1941 the imams of the major Muslim communities of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka, and Mustar had issued *fatwa* decrees, a sort of religious verdicts, forbidding the Bosnian Muslims to collaborate with the Ustasha government of NDH, which had encompassed their country under German and Italian accord. And here comes the mufti of Jerusalem, the great spiritual authority with the reputation and prestige of his city, and representing both the Nazis in Berlin and the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, and telling them: “No, no, no, forget about that. That verdict is not valid anymore.” And in 1943, when he visited all those four cities, he convinced the local religious leadership to come out in support of the Muslim recruits, thus mobilizing some twenty-one thousand people to serve in the Waffen-SS Division No. 13, notoriously known as the *Hanjar* Division, which in Turkish and Arabic means simply “dagger,” as a symbol of the war itself.

Some elaboration is needed nonetheless on the Islamic element, not only in itself, within which a Hussein al-Banna in Egypt and a Haj Amin in Jerusalem, Berlin, and Bosnia would naturally find common cause against Jews and Zionists, but especially on the ideological and political juncture that would allow both to act in concert to achieve a genocide against the Jewish people in the Middle East, and in Europe to aid the Axis Powers against the Allies. And after the war, the banner of virulent anti-semitism would definitely pass from Europe, with Nazi Germany at its center, to the

Islamic world led by the Arabs, and by fundamentalist Muslims like al-Qa'ida and Iran, since the end of the twentieth century. The writer who detected and researched the ideological link between Islamic fundamentalism and Nazi Judeophobia, in his book published in German, English, and Hebrew, is the German Matthias Kuntzel, a political scientist and a student of anti-semitism.[8] The only drawback in this seminal volume is that the author follows today's vogue among Western scholars, who differentiate between Islam and "Islamism," as if they were two different religions or systems of belief, attributing the built-in hatred to Jews only to the latter while the former seems to be generally exonerated. The problem is that it is becoming more and more difficult to differentiate between the two, if there ever were a difference, since the Muslim Brothers have moved to the international Muslim consensus, and even what is considered as fanatic "Islamism" has now become accepted as normative Islam.

Kuntzel's focus on the Muslim Brothers in Egypt not only interpreted that movement at the beginning of modern radicalism in Islam, but found extraordinary organizational similarities between it and Nazism and fascism in general, for example, the subordination of the individual to the collective will, the worship of iconic leadership, hostility toward liberal and democratic principles, vitriolic rejection of Communism, extreme opposition to capitalism, and a strong ambition among Muslims to establish a universal Muslim state, ruled by the Shari'a, similar to the Germanic thousand-year Reich that Hitler had in mind. In this ambience of continual fighting under strict rules of conduct and their relentless enforcement, the predominance of men was paramount, the submission of women obvious, as was martyrdom for the sake of the collective, and, above all, a common contempt, hatred, and obsession with the Jews, who were simultaneously feared and despised, hence the need to fight to the finish both the Jews and the British, the only nation that stood up against the Nazis at the opening of the war and confronted them fearlessly under Churchill. These similarities and affinities between the two ideas and nationalities emerged during the 1930s and contributed to the forging of the alliance between the two by the time the war broke out. It was the Muslim Brothers (MB) who translated Hitler's *Mein Kampf* into Arabic and distributed it throughout the Arab world and helped channel to Haj Amin in Palestine, who was facing similar challenges, arms and funds from Germany, which sustained him in his

major revolt against the British (and Zionism) in Palestine during the lead-up to the war (1936–39).

Of course, the center of gravity of Kuntzel's interest in the MB was not only their inspiration by Nazi doctrine, but their extended influence on Haj Amin and Palestinian Arabs, which facilitated the mufti's close collaboration with Hitler. That caused him to move to Berlin during the war and, after the war, to invite some MB troops to participate with the Palestinians in their war against the Jews in 1948–49. Historically, the fact that the Palestinians are still struggling today to establish a state of their own is the fruit of their and their Nazi allies' failure to wipe out the Jews of Palestine during the war, who stood after it as their main and victorious competitors. Under Nazi instigation, the Palestinians elected to claim all of Palestine undivided, instead of compromising over it with the Jews, so they ended up losing it all for more than six decades and entering the future with uncertainty, for it is very difficult to turn the clock back today. Kuntzel also laments the fact that the victorious allies, instead of punishing the MB and their supporters, including Haj Amin, after the war, for their collaboration with the Nazis and for concocting with them the ruin of Britain, on the contrary came to view their restored good relations with the Arab world as outweighing any doctrinal "deviation" by the mufti and his MB allies, who continue to this day to declare their abhorrence of the West, to profess virulent anti-semitism, to vow the destruction of Israel, to advocate Holocaust denial, and to hardly hide their admiration for Hitler and the Nazis. In the current unrest in the Arab world that has been wrongly dubbed the "Arab Spring," some of those themes are reemerging. Britain and the West, who were prepared to sacrifice their long-term interests for a temporary rehabilitation of their positions in the Middle East, may now be paying dearly for that momentary lapse in their thinking. Indeed, with British and American silent consent, France had permitted the mufti, back then, to run away from its territory and so avoid his trial as a war criminal and seek refuge in Egypt, which had become, just like Syria, Argentina, and Paraguay, a shelter for Nazi criminals after the war.

In spite of the many differences between Nazism and fascism on the one hand and the authoritarian regimes in the Arab and Islamic worlds on the other, there is a lasting red (now green) thread that continues to connect the two, long after the former has waned away in Europe and the latter has begun to shake off the unbearable regimes which have oppressed Arab

peoples for so long. These connections persist, in spite of the doctrinal reversals which have gripped the Arab world since the end of the war, and caused them to attribute Nazism to Israel. Devout Muslim radical practitioners, like the MB, Hamas, Hizbullah, and similar movements, indeed often attempt to wash themselves clean of Nazism by projecting it on Israel and accusing it of having adopted it. What truly unites these movements with bygone European fascism are indeed their common enchantment with modern technology (today it is Internet, satellites, social networks, and up-to-date television and radio broadcasting, and the most modern weaponry, including weapons of mass destruction); their fascination with violence and war, and the cultivation of supreme sacrifice, to the point of encouraging self-immolation, like the Islamikaze (that are wrongly viewed in the West as "suicide bombers"); the rejection of democracy and liberal values; and perhaps above all, the obsession that refuses to die, with eliminating the Jews wherever they can be found.[9] No wonder that spectacular acts of international terrorism, like September 11, the London and Madrid mass killings in civilian subways, hijacking airplanes and killing their passengers, or the Bali and other senseless bombings, have all an element of fanatic madness in them, reminiscent of the abuses of the Nazis. Even the Twin Towers' attack is strikingly identical to Hitler's similar fantasy to see Manhattan burning.[10]

Kuntzel's book explains what happened in Egypt in the years 1925–45 to turn the pro-Jewish sentiment in the early years of Zionist activity in Palestine, which was thought to benefit the entire area, into a hostile ambience which kindled the violent eruptions against the Jews thereafter. He attributes the radical change to the rise of the MB in 1928 that later impacted drastically the developments in mandatory Palestine, the relations between the Arabs and the Nazi regime, and ultimately the alliance between the mufti of Jerusalem and Hitler in person. He rightly observes that in the beginning of that period, amiable relations existed between the Muslim majority and the successful and well-to-do Jewish minority. But lest anyone believe, or come to the conclusion, that the Jews had always been privileged in Egypt at all times, and in general in the Arab and Islamic world, let us remember that when the state of Israel was founded in 1948 and the Jews found a shelter for themselves, the almost totality of the million Jews who had lived in the Arab and Islamic worlds emigrated either to the Jewish state or elsewhere in the West. American and European Jews

did not leave, and there must be a reason. The reason was that Jews had lived under the discriminatory and humiliating status of *dhimmis,* and there were periods that under particularly strict and harsh rulers, like the Almoravids in North Africa and the Mamluks in Egypt, or under the fanatic Shi'ites in Iran, Jews were persecuted, massacred, forced to convert to Islam, expelled, or constrained to run for their lives elsewhere.

Kuntzel speaks about contemporary Egypt, and it is there, under the pressure of the MB since 1928, on the eve of the World Depression which they could easily impute to the Jews, that the Jewish condition veered to the worse and had a direct impact on the situation in Palestine and on the growingly close relations between Arabs and Nazis. It was then and there that the Islamic connection to the Nazis and the Balkans began to burgeon, and the seeds of modern Muslim radicalism were sown, whence they would spread worldwide, under different appellations, to this very day. The membership of the MB, under its charismatic leader until 1940, Hassan al-Banna, grew from eight hundred in 1936 to two hundred thousand merely two years later, and half a million in 1948, with a military arm of about forty thousand. Ostensibly, the growth and the rhetoric were directed against the colonizing power, the British, who were not forthcoming on their promise to grant full independence to Egypt. Al-Banna took advantage of the post-World War I socioeconomic dislocations, and the building tensions with the British, to announce and promulgate his brand of conservative and restorative *Salafi* Islam which professed a return to the roots as in the times of the Prophet. He taught that Islam had lost its prestige and impact on daily life in Egypt due to Western intrusion, which lured people to secularism and to the abandonment of religion, and he propagated the return to the divine law that is incorporated in the Qur'an and the Sunna, which gave clear and detailed guidance to all needs of life.

The MB advocated a return to religious orthodoxy as the panacea not only for moral and social ills, but also for regaining the moral high ground that was lost to the West, by internationalizing the movement and attracting to it wide constituencies, especially of young people, and not only in the countryside where Islam had always kept its grip on the people, but also to reconquer the cities which had fallen to the secular, westernizing, and modernizing bourgeoisie. They recruited the foreign Muslim students who were studying in Cairo, to train them as their representatives when they returned to their countries of origin. Thus, they very early established

branches of the Brothers in Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan (later Jordan), and in 1940 the Palestine Committee was set up which encompassed the entire Middle East, and then the Far East Committee to cover the Muslim countries of Asia, and prophetically they even established the European Committee which has served its purpose only when Muslim immigration has intensified to Europe in the postwar period. Domestically, and following the European fascist pattern of Germany and Italy, the MB demanded the dismantlement of all political parties and the abolishment of liberal democracy in Egypt. This is the main reason, though there are also others connected to Egyptian, Arab, and Muslim traditional order, why in the 1920s Egypt and possibly also Iraq and others were far more democratic and dedicated to women's rights than ever since, but all of them embraced varying degrees of authoritarianism following the military coups that plagued them for almost a century, until the 2010s when their "Spring" at last permitted them to talk about democracy if not to achieve it.

The party of MB platform proposed a new political organization modeled on the medieval universal caliphate, based on *Shari'a* law and obeying the global caliph, much along the lines of the thousand-year Reich, just with another content to its ideology albeit with a similar organizational philosophy, which also prohibited any other competing all-encompassing theory like Communism. The MB soon began to pursue an organizational praxis, by penetrating Communist ranks and denouncing them to the state security apparatus. In this endeavor too, the MB felt they were treading on the Nazi's heels, launching a spreading pattern of confrontation which pitted Islam against Communism everywhere. Since in most communist parties in the Arab and Islamic worlds, Jews (and Christians) were more prominent than in other local political parties, due to their preferred adherence to an atheistic political entity where Islam played little or no part, Communism became also a channel to rationalize the growing hostility toward Jews, in both the MB and the Nazi political organization. Economically, the MB treaded its unique route when it forbade interest (which countered any ambition to establish a modern banking system), and created a commonality of interest between capital and labor, while at the same time recognizing, like in Nazi Germany, the significance of technology, industrialization, and work ethic, as a condition and prerequisite to gaining military preponderance and running a world Islamic regime.

The MB, again like its Nazi model, also professed a social and moral puritanism which sought to control individual desires and ambitions, by strictly adhering to conservative modes of conduct, avoiding material temptations, and aspiring to spirituality, a controlled ascetism which lent priority to satisfying the needs of the collective before turning to address personal necessities. In this light, or rather obscurity, one has to reconsider *kristallnacht* and other abuses by Nazi thugs toward their Jewish victims that they wished to subdue by terror and violence, as well as the violent outbursts of the MB then and the Hamas today, which burned down night clubs, brothels, and movie theaters, inherited from the Palestinian Authority in Gaza. Similarly, the Islamic Revolution of Iran, in February 1977, was triggered by the arson of a theater in a coastal city, by Muslim radicals who falsely claimed that a pornographic film was being shown, which justified the burning of the hall with its occupants inside. Since the MB, particularly their prominent leader, Sayyid Qutb, who inherited the clout of Banna after his assassination, saw Jews as the evil of the world and the cause of its misfortunes, then, of course, all acts and institutions of immorality, like theaters, movies, prostitution, drugs, corruption, and the deterioration of manners and values in all societies, were due to the Jewish management of world affairs. The MB could outdo the Nazis in their obsession with anything Jewish, and in the hatred they instigated against them in their constituencies as a result, so much so that they naturally concocted plans together to wipe out the cause and reason of these troubles by methodically exterminating that race. Those ideas have become so rooted in general Islamic and Arab culture that one can still detect them, without much effort, more than half a century after Nazism was routed and eradicated.

However, nothing illustrates the great doctrinal breakthrough of the MB as the operationalization of the idea of *Jihad,* from a dormant ideal whose time had revolved, to an active tool to combat present-day enemies, binding every individual Muslim, not only the Muslim *umma* as a whole. The rationale was that when the house is burning, it was incumbent on each individual Muslim to carry a bucket of water and contribute to the extinction of the fire the best he can, regardless of what the state, the public, or the community does or refrains from doing. The idea was that the Qur’anic tenet of *Jihad,* which had been the driving force of Islam at its inception, and the engine of its expansion, and had been over the years mostly viewed as merely an endeavor for self-striving and improvement, for

example, by spreading and propagating Islam, ought to be revived and the use of force converted from self-defense into propagatory activity. In other words, *Jihad* as a mere educational value ought not predominate and it should be developed into an active tool, as of old, to spread the word of Islam worldwide. Al-Banna gave this idea a very active twist, as in the times of the Prophet, essentialized in the popular slogan that is still central to MB affiliates like the Hamas: "Allah is our aim, the Prophet our model, the Qur'an our constitution, Jihad our path and death for Allah the sublimest of our ambitions." By promising to the casualties in battle eternal martyrdom, he turned death for the cause not only into something that does not inspire fear and abhorrence, but into a desirable ideal that every young Muslim can and should embrace, thus avoiding the torment of this worldly life and taking the shortcut to the eternal hereafter under the blissful protection of Allah. The revival of MB and *Salafi* Islam in the Arab and Islamic world following the "Spring" of 2011-12 attests to the tenacity of this thinking.

The dominating issue of the day for the MB, as the world war storm was gathering, remained to identify the enemy against whom it was worth dying. That could initially be the British, the colonizer from whom the MB wished its constituencies to disengage. But as the Palestinian issue loomed in the horizon of the MB in the 1930s and as Nazi anti-semitic propaganda focused on the Jews, it was only natural and expectable that the two trends would converge into one, and the ultimate enemy of both be identified as the Jews. This did not happen all of a sudden, but was the fruit of evolution and development, as Kuntzel shows. At first, as already mentioned earlier, the Egyptian civilian constitution of 1923, in that first manifestation of democracy in the Islamic and Arab worlds, which did not last, had proclaimed full equality to all citizens, and no religious loyalty was referred to as a matter of state concern, for faith remained the private domain of each individual, and the reigning monarchy was declared "constitutional." During that period, under the political domination of the Wafd Party, Jews were part and parcel of the social, economic, and political system, and they were welcome in all walks of life. Though a branch of the Zionist movement was established in Egypt in 1924, Palestine seemed remote, beyond the wilderness of the vast Sinai Desert, and pharaonic and democratic Egyptians did not sense as an inseparable part of the adjoining Arab world which they despised. The Jews were then a mere domestic

issue, as one of the three important denominational communities in the country, and no attention was yet paid to the international issues of world Jewry, nor to Zionism's struggle in Palestine. Nor was Palestine very noticeable to the Egyptian rank and file.

The positive change of ambience toward the Nazis also facilitated the emergence in Egypt of new semi-military movements like "Young Egypt," the "Young Muslim Association," and the MB, who watched on movie screens the pomp and circumstance in which similar movements held their processions in Germany, with uniforms, strict discipline, and total doctrinal dedication to their cause and leadership. Thus, the street made its appearance beside the monarchy and the Parliament, as a third political power to be reckoned with. The growing pro-Third Reich public sympathy, which was launched at first as a manifestation of the rising anti-British nationalist sentiment, was soon veered toward an anti-Jewish *Jihad*, once the Nazis diagnosed the situation in Palestine as a focal point of potential antagonism between Muslims and Jews, and decided to act in consequence. Their attention was thenceforth turned to transplanting the Palestinian controversy into Egypt and to harness the Egyptian Muslims to aid their coreligionists in Palestine against the Jews there and against world Jewry. The new campaign was to hinge on the mufti of Jerusalem, whose hatred to the Jews competed with that of the Nazis, and whose program of crushing Jewish immigration to Palestine, and of banning land sales to the Zionists, coincided with Nazi plans to diminish the Jews, exterminate them, and close all the avenues that might help to rescue them and to allow them into Palestine.

Perceptively, it was the Nazis themselves who triggered the explosion in Palestine of the conflict between Arabs and Jews that would serve as a German pretext to intervene and transplant that dispute from Palestine to the rest of the Islamic world. Due to the rise to power of the Nazis and the escalation in Jewish persecution throughout Germany, a steady stream of Jewish refugees, to whom other countries, including the most "liberal" and "humane" among them, had closed their gates, headed to Palestine, where the British, in retaliation, imposed the White Paper limiting Jewish immigration, and the Arabs, under the Mufti Haj Amin, launched the Arab Revolt (1936–39) against both the British mandatory power and the Jewish Zionists. The revolt afforded the MB the first opportunity to link their new interpretation of *Jihad* with the contemporaneous battle in Palestine. It was

in those years that membership of the MB had soared to two hundred thousand, some of them volunteering to go to the aid of Palestinians under the banner of *Jihad.* Thus, the active battle of the MB against the Jews was transplanted to Palestinian soil, much to the delight of Nazi propagandists who wished to see all those anti-Jewish manifestations as part of their worldwide blueprint to exterminate what they viewed as the "Jewish race."

While the MB urged Egyptians to boycott Jewish businesses, they also set up the "Central Committee to aid Palestine," which became their bastion of anti-Jewish activity, involving not only genuine fund-raising and aid to Palestinian Arabs, but also boycotts against Jews in Egypt and dissemination of leaflets in mosques and work places, warning of British and Jewish intentions to destroy Muslim holy places in Jerusalem (claims that have persisted over the past sixty years), to tear the Qur'an to pieces, and to trample over it. The Peel Commission, and especially its recommendation to divide Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state, raised the ire of the Palestinians and their supporters in Egypt, while the Egyptian government reverted to the utopian idea of establishing one state in Palestine where everyone can live in "peace and harmony," something never attained in that land, and seldom elsewhere, if we take Yugoslavia's history as a guide. These manifestations of moderation and readiness to compromise were violently rejected by the MB throughout Egypt, which expressed itself in student demonstrations, "Down with the Jews!" and "Jews, get out of Egypt and Palestine!" Reflecting the Nazi propaganda which diffused in Europe the hoax of the "Jewish threat" in those days, leaflets of MB in Egypt also cried and shouted the "imminent danger of Egyptian Jews," attributing to them all the evils of the world.

Again, mimicking what had been unfolding in Nazi Germany, young Egyptians were urged to buy only Muslim goods, to prepare themselves for *Jihad* to "defend the Al-Aqsa mosque," to donate for the benefit of Palestine anything they might receive as presents. Muslim ladies began proclaiming to the media their readiness to sacrifice their sons in *Jihad* in Palestine, and at the same time Jewish synagogues and residences were bombed, a testament to the extent that MB propaganda, fanaticism, and anti-semitism had predominated the public agenda in Egypt, though other organizations also participated in the anti-Jewish "festival" and were aided and financed by Nazi funds. While previously many Egyptian media had refused to participate in anti-Jewish incitement, by the outbreak of World

War II in 1939, the Egyptian public as well as its government and media had embraced a clearly anti-Zionist inclination which would lead it directly into its disastrous involvement in the 1948 war, from which it emerged badly broken and bruised by the skin of its teeth. The MB crowned their incremental propaganda successes in Egypt with the convening in Cairo in 1938 of an "Inter-Parliamentary Congress of Arab and Islamic countries," where not only the Egyptian government took an anti-Zionist stance, but so did the other participants, thus internationalizing the Palestinian question and bringing it to the attention of other Arab and Muslim peoples than the Palestinians and the Egyptians.

Thus, Germany identified its interest as lying with the Arab world, which was the most dedicated and vocal in its opposition to the idea of a Jewish state. In consequence, many Arab students were invited to study in Germany, German companies took in Arab interns, Arab political leaders were invited to attend the annual marches and processions of the Nazi Party, and senior Arab military officers were invited to attend maneuvers of the *Wehrmacht.* In Berlin an "Arab Club" was founded, which became a center of propaganda for Palestine and against the Jews, and later a center for the Arab and Muslim broadcasts under the Nazi regime during the entire extent of the war. The Nazi Ministry of Propaganda, via its representative in Jerusalem, Dr Franz Reichart, maintained close relationship with the mufti, and channeled monies to Arab media and agents. In 1937, an SS delegation, where Adolf Eichmann was a member, went to the Middle East for a study tour, followed by many other high-level delegations. In Damascus, they set up in 1939 an "Arab Club" which served as a clandestine base to train "volunteers" to the Arab Revolt which was raging in Palestine against the British Mandate and to undo the project of the Jewish National Home in the land. The Germans responded positively to the urgings of the mufti and supplied weapons and funds which maintained the momentum of the revolt during its last two years (1937–39).[11]

As the British were striving to put an end to the revolt, the Nazi press was enraged about the "cruelty with which the British were quelling Arab freedom fighters," so much so that the active support lent by the Nazis to the mufti, against the Brits and the Jews, was taken by some as a general rehearsal preceding the real war.[12] The British, who were eager to preserve their good relations with the Arabs in view of the approaching war, looked

with horror at the rise of radical Islam in Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine, and at the extraordinary convergence of this movement with European fascism, especially the effort deployed by Nazism to aid the Arab cause and thus jeopardize British positions in the Middle East. So, as the Arab street was boiling hot with anti-British sentiment and pro-Nazi demonstrations, and as Jewish synagogues were being torched on *kristallnacht* (November 9, 1938) throughout Germany, Britain was caught in panic under its spineless government which sold off Czechoslovakia to Hitler in Munich, and it resolved to abolish the recommendations of the Peel Commission, cancel the first Partition Plan for Palestine, and put a sweeping ban on Jewish immigration under the infamous White Paper. That happened precisely as the Jewish immigration was coming to its apex (in 1931, only four thousand Jewish immigrants, in 1935 sixty thousand), as their dispossession in Germany was accelerating, as the rest of the world was rejecting their plea for shelter, and as the rebellion in Palestine was picking momentum.

The mufti's almost innate anti-semitism did not need Nazi encouragement to express itself. Already in 1929, unrest in Palestine unfolded, where Palestinian crowds led by the young mufti, were incited to kill and maim fellow inhabitants of Jerusalem, Hebron, and other cities, for no other reason than being Jewish, even before there was any mass immigration of Jews to the land. The mufti, as the president of the Supreme Muslim Council, also held the highest religious function in the land, and in that premodern society, religion was the main source of power and authority. He lent to his national struggle against Zionism a religious and a pan-Islamic character inasmuch as he also loathed the Jews for being a harbinger of westernism, modernism, secularism, and liberalism in the Middle East. He regarded the modern media, notably cinema, theater, and some Western papers and magazines, as agents of corruption which undermined Islamic culture and destroyed morality, especially among the Muslim youth. For example, he viewed liberated Jewish girls in Palestine, who filled pioneering jobs in the fledgling Israeli society, and adopted liberal fashions of dress and of mixing up with men who were not their spouses, as a debilitating process of degeneration, which by exhibiting themselves in the public square were likely to lure Muslim youth away from their restrained mores. In his extreme puritanical conservatism, he found an ally in German fascism, so that as soon as the Rashid Ali Revolt in Iraq was crushed by the British, he turned to Berlin, where he became a

loyal servant of the German cause and stayed there to the end of the war. But when the Americans landed in Morocco in 1942, he declared that they were subservient to the Jews, therefore they were by definition the enemies of Islam and the Arabs.

The mufti's clout, both as a Muslim cleric and as the loyal servant of the Nazis, was fully exploited by the Germans, first when he was fully mobilized, together with sixty broadcasters in various languages, translators, and administrative and technical staff, to the task of broadcasting Nazi propaganda in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Urdu. In 1939–45, his station near Berlin, which broadcast round the clock Arabic music, Islamic programs, news about the war viewed in Nazi eyes, and an incessant flow of German propaganda, was the most listened to in the Arab world. The mufti's involvement in the programs became predominant since he moved to Berlin after the Baghdad fiasco in 1941 and stayed there until the final Nazi rout. In 1940, he worded the draft of a joint German-Italian proclamation recognizing the right of Arab countries to solve the Jewish problem in the same fashion those two Axis powers did, and from 1942 onward, he was involved in the permanent presence in occupied Athens of a special SS unit that stood ready to move to Palestine and undertake the extermination of its Jews, with local Arab help, after the victory by Erwin Rommel in the Western Desert, which seemed a certainty, came to pass. In 1943, when Himmler initiated, both as a propaganda measure and as a means to obtain the release of twenty thousand German POWs, to allow the rescue of five thousand Jewish children from German crematoria, Haj Amin, who believed in his ruthless and cruel Allah, fought that decision tooth and nails and succeeded in abrogating it by interceding with Himmler, his close friend, and so he could add to his bloody "credit" the gassing of those innocent victims of the Nazi-Muslim hatred of the Jews.

The blood-thirsty mufti, who hardly fit the conduct that is expected of a cleric, did not stop there. When he got word that Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary consented to allow Jewish children and their guardians to find shelter in Palestine, he wrote to the Bulgarian foreign minister and prevailed upon him to prevent the emigration of Jewish children from his country to a place where they would escape any supervision upon them, and send them instead to a place like Poland where they could be more closely watched. The emigration permits were abolished, the kids were exterminated, and the Palestinian hero could add another feather to his

headgear. In 1947, after twenty years of close collaboration of the mufti with the MB's al-Banna, which had started even before the MB was officially established in 1928, the mufti was appointed as al-Banna's deputy and the leader of the MB in Palestine, in preparation for the 1948 invasion of fledgling Israel by the Arab armies, with the active support of MB troops that were dispatched to Palestine to overwhelm the Jews, and possibly to carry out the extermination plan that the mufti had in mind, once his blueprint for the "final solution" in conjunction with his Nazi allies had fallen through. In his calculus of the upcoming war, the "armies of Allah" were bound to crush the "armies of Satan." But this time Allah was less alert, less combative, and less determined than the mufti and his followers had expected and hoped.

In the fall of 1942, Himmler asked Hitler for the green light to recruit one Bosnian-Muslim SS division, to deal with the partisans and other Yugoslav dissidents, so as to free German troops for the foundering Russian front. By Christmas of 1943, some one hundred thousand Bosnians, almost 10 percent of the total, had been killed in the war, and a quarter million more were displaced, mainly by *Cetnik* Serbs. Himmler fantasized that he could capitalize on those data to mobilize the Bosniaks, in addition to the fact that he thought they were by nature and training very obedient to their superiors, due to their fearlessness and eagerness to die as *shahids.* Himmler and his ilk also theorized that Bosniaks were the descendants of the ancient sixth-century Goths, who had shown their bravery in World War I as part of the Austro-Hungarian army. Himmler thought to capture and revive that inherited spirit in the new Bosnian SS division, in order to battle against and destroy the growing threat posed by Tito and his awesome and successful partisans. In February 1943, the plan was approved by Hitler, and Himmler appointed Artur Phleps the commander of the 7th Waffen-SS division, in charge of the recruitment process, which was unprecedented among non-Germans. Karl von Krempler, an SS officer who was held as an expert on Muslim affairs, was nominated as the actual recruiter, under Phleps' orders.

The Waffen-SS (or armed SS troops), which had started with three battalions when they were founded to replace the SA that was eliminated by Hitler when he thought that its commander threatened his own leadership of the Nazi Party, had grown to thirty-eight divisions (most of them ethnically German, and some notoriously manned by Latvians, Hungarians, and

Bosnians), who were an armed branch of the Nazi Party, which operated as an elite security force in the conquered territories. They committed many war crimes and their leaders were tried in Nuremberg after the war. Already in 1942, the Waffen-SS was becoming a sort of foreign legion in the German armed forces, as more and more foreigners joined in. The 13th Mountain Division, named *Hanjar* (dagger in Arabic), was recruited in Croatia (which included then Bosnia as part of the Ustasha state), Serbia, Hungary, and Romania, with the mission to battle against the partisans. Some of the recruits were *Volksdeutsche,* namely the small German community in occupied Serbia, whom Himmler had included in the compulsory military service that all Germans were obliged to undergo. From 1943, as the situation on the war fronts worsened, more foreign divisions were recruited to the Waffen-SS in France, Scandinavia, Ukraine, and Galicia. In September 1943, as the Allies invaded Italy and the Germans had to rush reinforcements to hold the line of defense, recruitment of foreigners was scaled up to allow the creation of the 24th Division made up of volunteers from Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Ukraine.

In March 1943, the German officer Von Krempler, accompanied by the Croatian Alija Suljak, traveled for eighteen days through eleven Bosnian counties, making use of Islamic symbols like green banners sporting crescents, against Suljak's best judgment, who would have preferred the use of Ustasha symbols. In Tuzla they met the local Muslim leadership, and in Sarajevo they were introduced to Ra'is al-Alami, the chief imam of Bosnia, without the presence of anyone from the Ustasha authorities. Much to the dislike of the Croats, who demanded Krempler's removal because he also recruited Muslim deserters and Catholics from the Ustasha army, his standing in the SS permitted him to ignore those reservations from his service and to pursue his operation. In the summer of 1943, the Jerusalem mufti was invited to lend his help to the recruitment of the Muslims of Bosnia, and he was flown from Berlin to second Von Krempler in his endeavor. The main obstacle that the mufti met in his encounter with Bosnian Muslims was the fact that back in 1941, when the Ustasha state was founded, the imams of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mustar, and Banja Luka had prohibited their followers from collaborating with the fascist state under whose aegis they were now placed. But using his clout as the mufti of the third holiest city in Islam, Haj Amin, who now also boasted his close collaboration with Hitler and Himmler, succeeded in convincing the

Bosniaks to reverse their position and to join the new 13th Waffen-SS division that was in the making, since “it was a Muslim military unit intended to operate in the interest of Muslims.”

The Croat-Ustasha foreign minister, Mladen Lorkovic, suggested that the new unit be dubbed SS Ustasha Division, so that it be known as a Croatian, with contingents such as Bosnian and Kerajinan. Interestingly, the head of the state, Ante Pavelic, was opposed to forming a Muslim division *per se*, for fear that it might lead to Muslim demands for independence after the war, while he regarded Bosnia as an integral part of the Ustasha state. At the end, the division was baptized as the 13th Mountain Croat *Hanjar* Division, in spite of the fact that only 10 percent of its recruits were Catholic. The mufti demanded that the division be designed to defend Bosnian Muslims and prohibited from leaving Bosnian borders, a limitation that was later ignored by the Germans once they obtained his blessing for its recruitment. In 1944, another SS division, Kama, was established, probably in the wake of the steady thinning of the German ranks, due to the rumors that *Hanjar* would leave Bosnia to fight for the Nazis elsewhere. In consequence, mass desertions ensued, sometimes of entire companies with their weapons, and Kamas’ new recruits were used to fill the ranks. The division in fact was sent to occupied France for training, and at the end of 1943 to Germany, to end up in February 1944 in Bosnia once again. It counted more than twenty-one thousand recruits at its peak, two thousand eight hundred of whom were Christian Croats and the balance Muslims. Every battalion had its own Muslim chaplain—an imam—and all the signal personnel were German. One battalion was made up of Kosovar and Sanjak Muslims, which was transferred back to Kosovo in April when the 21st Albanian Waffen-SS Division was created.

The greatest drama of the Brothers’ success since their inception eighty-five years earlier was their masterful access to power under President Muhammed Mursi in the year 2012–13, until they were toppled, outlawed, and prosecuted in summer 2013 by the very minister of defense, Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, that Mursi had appointed when he took up the presidency. As a matter of fact, of all Islamic countries affected by the Spring, Egypt was the most important and most significant due to both its size and might, and to its centrality in the Arab world, without whom no war and no peace can be decided. In Egypt of the Spring Era (2011–13), the Muslim fundamentalists (Brothers and Salafis) offered the most viable alternative to

Mubarak's rule and also a likely example that other Spring-stricken countries could try to follow.[13] The new MB president, Muhammed Mursi, pledged that his presidency would maintain a civil and democratic rule, together with equality between the genders and civil freedom, and promised that he would honor all the Egyptian international obligations, including peace with Israel, in complete reversal of the traditional MB opposition to any peace or settlement with Israel. He was buttressed in government by the 75 percent fundamentalists in the Egyptian Parliament who supported him (45 percent from the Brothers and 30 percent from other Salafists) and by the new constitution that he had adopted by popular referendum against the deep division of public opinion and vast demonstrations by his supporters, opposed by the bourgeois-liberal and westernized urban opposition.

It is noteworthy that back when the Nazis had tried at first, through their offices in the Arab world, to incite Muslims against Jews in the 1930s, they met with failure because a reasonable relationship had existed between the Muslims and their Jewish minority, especially in Egypt, in spite of the occasional outbursts of violent anti-semitism during the Damascus Blood Libel of 1840, and the pogroms which had accompanied Jewish existence from Morocco to Iran over the years. However, when the MB harnessed themselves to the Nazi propaganda, attacks against the Jews escalated (the most infamous unfolded in Baghdad, Iraq, Libya, and Morocco in the middle of World War II and its aftermath). This tradition remained stable thereafter: in 1948 the Brothers sent their men to fight for the Palestinians in the 1948 war, and branches of the Brothers were founded in all the Palestinian territories, including Transjordan. It was those Islamic associations which erected along the years the infrastructure for the Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza, and these forces led anti-semitic hatred to its most heinous extremes and scuttled any attempt to conclude peace between Palestinians and Israel. Therefore, even at those rare occasions when there was a peace accord with Israel, it has been the Brothers who led the forces violently opposed to it. Sadat, who was assassinated by extremist elements of the Islamic Jihad, was the one Arab leader who tried to courageously face them, and he paid with his life. For that reason, opinion has been prevailing in Israel that there is no point to cut any deal with these Muslim fanatics, because they would not live up to it. The Hamas, which is a branch of the Brothers, says expressly in its platform that their problem with Israel is not territorial, because even had Israel been left with a minor piece of

land in its possession, that would still not be acceptable to them, due to the fact that the entire land of Palestine was a *waqf (holy* endowment) confided to the Muslims by Allah to safeguard for all generations to come, with the result that Israel cannot keep any part of it for itself.

Therefore, the moment Mursi could tactically placate the fears of the Military Council in Cairo and assure it of his docility in accepting the limitations imposed on his presidential authority, the road to his rule of the country was paved. The process of recognizing and declaring Mursi as the elected president was long and painful. On the eve of that final declaration, numerous were his supporters who demonstrated on Tahrir Square holding white shrouds in their hands, to mean that they were prepared to sacrifice themselves as *shahids,* if Mursi is not declared the winner. It is clear that, had his opponent Shafiq been declared president, bloody unrest would have broken out, for the Brothers were not prepared to accept any other election result. That, of course, prompted many to fear that the elections were not truly democratic, if only one result could be accepted and all the others rejected under threat of violence. In other words, did the official in charge of announcing the results have any other choice but that Mursi was the winner? That choice seemed logical when in the preceding parliamentary elections 75 percent of the voters opted for the Brothers and their *Salafi* Allies, meaning that Mursi should have enjoyed a much larger popular vote than the one officially accorded to him, of slightly over the 50 percent mark. In any case, on that day while they were gathering in the Tahrir Square, a fateful atmosphere reigned in the environing streets: either Mursi is elected or war is breaking out. For Mursi's followers, his election stood beyond doubt, and anything less would have meant a return to the old rigging practices. Elections under the threat that only one result is acceptable are not exactly a democratic process. More question marks were raised in Egypt and elsewhere as to the undemocratic procedures adopted by Muslim fundamentalists, in spite of the façade of liberal democracy that they put up. We recall that at the beginning of the revolution, in order to assuage the fears of the Egyptian public, the Brothers announced that they would not vie for more than 50 percent of the representatives in Parliament, but at the end they won 75 percent of the seats together with the *Salafis,* their allies. At the outset they assured that they would not participate in the presidential elections, but in March 2012, they changed their position and even accused the Military Council of the intention to rig the results. They

threatened that if any of the vestiges of Mubarak regimes won, they would respond with mass demonstrations, for as Mursi's campaign manager announced: "the Egyptians have rid themselves of Mubarak, not in order to get another Mubarak, like Shafiq and Co." Mursi pledged that if he won the elections, he would see to it that no one of Mubarak's people would continue to hold any position of influence. And that was a pledge he promptly implemented.

These ideological commitments notwithstanding, anyone could follow the first practical steps of the Mursi government in the real world and observe to what extent he was able to harmonize policy-making with his MB doctrine. One was stunned not so much by the reaction of the people, who had enough of Mubarak's corruption and was waiting for a change that was obtained finally, but by the hypocrisy of the West, which never raised a voice against the previous regime's corruption, the rigging of elections, the arrest of dissidents, and the perpetuation of illiteracy, poverty, and disease in Egyptian society. He was also dismayed to face the runaway demographic growth, which brought the country from a thirty million population sixty years ago, and which exported food and others goods, to a poor, import-dependent society of eighty-five million souls today. When President Obama decided to appeal from Cairo to the Islamic world, in 2009, he did not say one word of criticism against that destructive state of affairs, hoping thereby not to damage the famous stability that was the top priority in his calculations, and did not pay attention to the crying of the political prisoners who were rotting in prisons. All Mubarak could assume then was that America stood firmly at his side without qualification. Then, what incentive would he have had to improve? The Americans were also loathe to take any measure against the Mubarak regime, which turned the American-supported peace treaty with Israel into a bad farce, as Egyptian tourism to Israel was completely discontinued. Anti-semitic attacks continued on Israel and the Jews, with Sho'a denial a major theme, inundating the Egyptian press, including the state-controlled Sinai being invaded by terror, smuggling, and illegal migrants. Mubarak, unwilling or unable to do much about it, was hiding behind American support without any incentive to mend his ways, until he was abandoned by his allies and thrown to the dogs.

Already in his first weeks at the helm, Mursi, who was credited as a MB with long-term planning and patience borne out of experience, precipitated

things when he faced the military council that in fact held power since the revolution of January 25, 2011, and neutralized its overwhelming influence. In early August 2012, merely two months after his swearing-in ceremony, he had to make his first major choice between his Islamic commitment and his national security considerations. The Sinai Peninsula was becoming a base of al-Qa'ida-type terrorists, who thought they could take advantage of the chaos in Egypt to support the nearby Hamas in Gaza, to help smuggle into Israel drugs and illegal Muslim migrants from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan, and to mount attacks against Israel, while the latter was considered unable and unwilling to retaliate due to the restrictions put on it by the bilateral peace treaty with Egypt. Mursi was supposed, according to straight Islamic calculations, to support these Muslim provocations of Israel. Thus, in early August, a group of Bedouin smugglers, reinforced by Hamas and al-Qa'ida who sought hideouts in Sinai, penetrated to the proximity of the Israeli border in order to exploit the *inter-regnum* in Cairo and try to precipitate border incidents that might escalate to full conflict between the two countries, thus putting an end to the Israeli-Egyptian peace arrangement. The gas pipeline through which Egypt supplied gas to Israel under contract was blown up fifteen times in the year and a half since the revolution, and it became evident that the Egyptian army was neither willing nor able to protect it. When Mursi came in and demanded to be sworn in so as to take up his duties, General Tantawi, the minister of defense and the head of the Military Council which controlled the country, concurred, provided he kept the portfolio of defense so as to safeguard all the privileges the army enjoyed since the 1952 revolution. Exactly following the advice he received from PM Erdogan on his visit to Cairo previously, Mursi accepted the terms on the face of it, until he was in a position to move on his own, purge the army from that old guard, and appoint his own people that would no longer threaten him, so as to enable him to implement his program.

The problem of Sinai immediately climbed to the top of Mursi's activities, not only because it borders with the Gazan Palestinians as well as with Israel, but it also built up as a threat against Egypt's own national security, a concern that any president must tackle. Many Middle East specialists have expressed their concerns about the imminent danger displayed by combatant groups moving to the Sinai Peninsula which is located in Egypt. A popular destination among Israeli vacationing tourists,

the Netanyahu administration was among those who issued a warning, urging Israelis to return to their homes, thus showing that the fear over the safety of visitors to the peninsula was not unfounded. The Sinai bombings of 2004 had targeted tourist hotels and killed thirty-four while injuring 171. The Israeli prime minister previously aired his concerns over what he believed to be the “lawlessness” situation that Sinai was descending into, which contrasted greatly with the three decades of peace the country had enjoyed with Egypt. In response to this, Arab critics have said that the current unease and rising tensions act as a motive for Israel to step into the Sinai region and “achieve its ambitions under the pretext of the deteriorating security conditions.” A growing number of sources have claimed that armed groups have made camp in the area, which resulted from the fall of the Mubarak’s government, causing a lack of adequate security and creating a safe haven for groups with extreme Islamic fundamentalist values. According to informed members of the Egyptian security forces, Sinai’s lack of military personnel, embedded in the peace treaty of 1979, allows such groups to build upon their resources and plan their attacks without fear of being counterraided by either the Israelis or the Egyptians. Further information has unearthed that if they were not stopped soon, their growing array of nationalities and expertise would propel them to be a frightening brunt. That dark prospect appeared to already be underway if the reports that they were in the possession of smuggled weaponry, en route from Libya and Sudan, were held to be true.

Many residents of Rafah, an important town located in north Sinai, have also come forth with their accounts. They claim that those groups are attracting young men with the promises of riches and, in some cases, paying for their marriages. Such an appraisal of these young men doesn’t concur with the previous notion presented to the world of the young “Middle Eastern liberals” who set the protests in their countries which amount to rebellion against the regime. However, the danger felt by the local Sinai community suggests that the tides have turned and those men have found another battle against perceived injustice to fight, which is the anti-Israel cause. On the other hand, reports have suggested that many of these men are escaped prisoners; and the freedom they gained amid the chaos created by the revolution in fact greatly adds to their threat. Egyptian political figures have also contributed to the matter, the majority believing that these groups are exploiting the country’s current fragile state of chaos to go

where they wish and do what they wish. Some of them have been identified to be Palestinian organizations, whose particular intentions have not been fathomed as yet. Such groups as “the *Mujahadeen Shura* Council” have recently posted a video on the Internet horrifically boasting of their targets near the Egyptian border with Israel and claiming that such actions are “a gift to our brothers,” members of other similar extremist groups. Another Jihadist organization took responsibility for the calculated bombing of the main gas pipeline which supplied gas to the “Zionist Entity.”

What these groups hold in common is the view that they must eradicate infidels, in other words non-Muslims. This is further evidenced by the horrendous “suicide bombings” carried out by the Jihad group, also believed to be situated in Sinai, against the Israeli and US embassies in the capital city of Uzbekistan. The attacks killed at least nine people while wounding many more. However, some have been questioning the credibility of the danger posed by that medley of incoherent groups. As far as individuals belonging to towns predominantly inhabited by the desert-dwelling Bedouins are concerned, these fears are underestimated because they are “merely based on rumors.” They have claimed that while they have heard of the presence of militant groups in the deserts of Sinai, they haven’t come across them. While they cannot yet confirm the militants’ existence in the area, it would appear that the Egyptian security forces are dependent on the Bedouins to attempt restraining the groups’ activities. This appears to be their preferred route as opposed to direct armed intervention, so as to avoid straining the tension between the Bedouins and the forces. Furthermore, the security forces consider armed intervention to result in large losses that simply could not be afforded amid the country’s new developments. Mursi’s advent to the presidency may have nevertheless introduced a firmer mode of action.

The day of truth arrived on August 7, 2012, in the middle of the searing heat and the reckoning of the Ramadan fast, when everything usually sinks into torpor, and an ambience of fateful solemnity envelops all men and places. At late night, while one of the Egyptian military bases in Sinai, close to the Israeli border, was busy with its late night prefast meal, a terrorist group of Muslim fundamentalists attacked, killing sixteen soldiers, robbing two vehicles, and heading toward the nearby Israeli border, which it crossed instantly, but exploded accidentally in the process, killing all occupants of the armored car, with the other vehicle racing toward an Israeli

border settlement in order to explode a second car bomb there, until it was intercepted from the air and eliminated. The Egyptians had known for the past few years that Muslim fundamentalists of all sorts were infiltrating into the Sinai, where following the chaos of the Spring they could find hideouts like in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Yemen, and the fringes of the Sahara; and the Mubarak administration was, all along, either unable or unwilling to quell them. After Mursi was sworn in, and in view of his known Brotherhood background, terrorists among them must have thought that their era had dawned. They had blown up the gas pipeline to Israel on fifteen occasions since the turmoil began, but they probably miscalculated this time, because the killing of Egyptian soldiers, who are considered as a national asset, not defenders of the regime like in Syria and Libya, raised strong nationalistic sentiment across Egypt, especially that they were slain on Ramadan while preparing to observe the fast.

In the recent past, whenever Israel was attacked from Sinai, the Egyptians denied against all evidence, but this time, Mursi, the consummate Muslim, had to align with the hurt national pride and react. Judging from his later acts and the swiftness with which he acted against the top brass of the military, which had just two months earlier compelled him to accept the curtailment of his authority and to concur to Tanta-wi's appointment as minister of defense, one can conclude that Mursi jumped on the occasion to settle his accounts with the army and to retrieve the authority he was robbed of. Paradoxically, as was their wont, Egyptians ran the rumor that it was all the work of the Israeli *Mossad*, at the same time that popular demands were heard for the need to revenge the wanton killing of the sixteen hero *shahids.* Big unfriendly crowds gathered in front of the Israeli Embassy in Cairo, demanding revenge against the perpetrators, and the Muslim Brotherhood site condemned Israel for its infamy in attacking innocent and peaceful Egyptians on their Ramadan day. They were apparently oblivious to the fact that in Ramadan 1973 it was their President Sadat who had launched war against Israel. Not surprisingly, President Mursi also swiftly delivered. He pledged in public that there would be revenge. In other cultures, retaliation is taken for such attacks in order to punish the culprits for their violation of some rule (in our case, the peace with Israel), or to deter further attacks, both rational strategic reactions. Here, the need for revenge came to satisfy a gut feeling of hurt pride, and the popular demand to act had nothing to do with what Egypt might or might not gain from the operation. After having

appropriately received clearance from Israel to introduce into Sinai armored weapons and aircraft that were otherwise banned under the peace treaty of 1979, in order to finally launch a mopping operation against those terrorist bases, both Mursi and Tantawi showed up in Sinai to direct the troops in their sweep. Who would have thought that Brother Mursi would order and lead an operation that Mubarak had dodged for years? The worst was yet to come.

In the process of the mopping operation, Mursi and Tantawi were shown in the media leading the troops and discoursing with them, and even eating the *iftar* (end of the fast meal) with the soldiers. And suddenly, out of the blue sky, Mursi sent his spokesman to announce the dismissal of Tantawi as minister of defense and Anan as chief of staff, after he had removed the week before the chief of intelligence, and appointed others in their stead. This immediately presented Mursi as a fearless and determined leader, who has a program of action and follows it scrupulously. When some free-spirited Egyptian journalists complained that the authorities had not heeded the Israeli intelligence warnings of an impending terrorist attack, he avoided attending the funeral of the sixteen slain soldiers and it was his Prime Minister Qindil who took most of the popular blame and rage, as he was accused as the "murderer." Another reason for popular anger was the much talk about "Israel's needed permission" to the Egyptians to operate in Sinai with armor and aircraft. Why should great and glorious Egypt, the pride of the Arabs and their defender, went the argument, need permission from that cowardly Jewish entity? In the meantime, Egypt's obligation to live by the Peace Treaty and prevent any hostile activity from its territory against Israel was forgotten. While the debate was still raging on why the president and the defense minister joined hands in cleansing Sinai in a major operation that Mubarak had never dared to undertake, came Mursi's sudden dismissal of the top brass and proved his dogged determination to defy the Military Council which had tried to curtail his authority and his privileges.

Israelis had all along heeded Mubarak's warnings that the alternative to him were the Brothers, because they understood that waiting in the aisles to inherit him were not some enthusiastic democrats, as it was naively believed in the West, which took at face value the sloganeering of the demonstrators who screamed "democracy!" from the top of their lungs, but multigenerational adepts of the Brotherhood who had been dreaming of this day, and who looked more like the Taliban to the members of the American

Congress, or MPs of the British Parliament. For that reason, in spite of the sympathy that many Israelis felt for the young demonstrators in Tahrir Square, they did not think that it was time to terminate the relatively quiet and workable relationships they had worked out with Mubarak in the previous three decades. Moreover, many of them never thought that the Brothers were heading to take over the rule of Egypt, or that if they did they would behave fanatically. But in fact, if we take for guidance the declarations of Ahmed Badi, the chief spiritual guide of the Brotherhood, to wit that "the foundation of Israel was the most grievous international disaster that ever happened," and called the Arab armies to challenge it, there is not much room for optimism. Nonetheless, Mursi keeps repeating that he is obligated to respect all the international obligations of his country, including the peace with Israel, though he usually adds: "but also Egypt's interests." Are we then watching a sophisticated deception campaign of the Brotherhood to mislead the entire world, until its rule takes root and it is self-confident to do what it wishes, and finally realize its dream of islamizing Egyptian society, in line with their step by step long haul strategy, or are in for a surprise by a visionary president, who realizes that leading a complicated society is slightly more difficult than sermonizing about it and criticizing civil and military leaders who had been doing the job before him?

While the Military Council governed Egypt during the eighteen months that followed the Spring, many candidates ran for elections, and most of those who aspired to the presidency were discarded, including some famous names like Muhammed Barad'i, 'Amr Musa, and Ahmed Shafiq, until finally Mursi was elected. In that protracted process we learned something about Egyptian society which had not much of a democratic nature about it, but was reminiscent of Republican Turkey until Erdogan, where the army became the supreme arbiter of power when the civil system failed. Egypt under the Military Council had succeeded behind the scene to disqualify many of the candidates for election, to disband an elected Parliament, to curtail the president's authority and prerogatives before he was elected, as they passed an amendment to the constitution which took away his rights to declare war and to command the army, and even deprived him of some protocolary symbols like being sworn in by Parliament, which would have fixated the symbolic link between the executive and the legislative branches of government, both dominated by the Muslim Brothers. As already

mentioned, one of the most enthusiastic visitors to Cairo after the revolution was Erdogan, who certainly warned his host Brothers that for the Spring to succeed, the army had to be dissociated from politics and returned to its barracks, as he had himself done in Turkey. Precisely because of that lingering suspicion did the military demand guarantee that their prerogatives, political and economic, would be preserved and that they would not be court-martialed for "conspiracy" against the elected ruler, as Erdogan had done to his top brass.

Fears and suspicions were raised as to what the future held for Egypt, not only in the West and Israel but also in the larger Arab and Islamic worlds. For example, concern was voiced in Egypt, like in other places, lest the Muslim Brothers apply the well-tested strategy of educating the young generations on the vision of returning to the roots of the ancestors (that is the meaning of *salafiya),* once their *Salafi* partners won 30 percent of the vote in Parliament, thus bringing the total achievement of the fundamentalists to an overwhelming 75 percent. With such a spectacular success, fundamentalists in power are bound to alter the curricula at school and reorient them to the past, to emphasize classical Arabic, the language of the Holy Book, and Islamic studies, including the Hadith, Quranic exegesis, *Shari'a,* the Prophet's *Sira* (biography) and everything related to that, like the ancients and the heritage of the predecessors. This is usually accompanied by separation between the genders in education, and enforcing the veil for women. These practices are already applied in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, partly in Turkey, and in Sudan, Afghanistan, and Somalia. In many of those countries, European history, languages, and thought are cancelled and replaced by Islamic history and by chapters of the Islamic past that have relevance to the contemporary world. For example, during the study of the Rashidun, Abu Bakr's primacy is underlined for the Sunnite students, and Ali's for the Shi'ites.

Not only was the study of foreign languages and history likely to suffer, but also art and dance and anything likely to contradict *Shari'a* teachings. Even in medicine, those islamizing educators wished to teach solely in Arabic; some even planned to cancel the programs of adult education, and of eradicating illiteracy; some said because of the mixed audiences in those courses; others cynically claimed that it was precisely due to the fact that the fundamentalists came to power, thanks to those illiterate social strata, that they had to eradicate their further educational programs. Those who

feared the impact of fundamentalist education also predicted the enforcement of censorship in general, especially on any physical contacts between young men and women in public, and on the exposure of anything feminine, be it even a curl of hair which escaped the control of the head scarf. They also talked of appointing a minister to supervise public morality, whose budget would equal that of other highest spending departments like the Ministry of Defense, the rationale being that the latter would "defend the homeland from Zionism, while the former would protect the nation from libertinism." From the discussions one could read and hear in Egypt, this was the price it was feared that society would have to pay for the rise of the Brothers and their allies, unless, of course, we were in for an unlikely surprise that was being concocted by Mursi that no one could have predicted.

If these dreary forecasts were to materialize, then Egypt would be slowly edging toward the like of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (1996–2002), until it was swept away by the American intervention there following September 11, 2001. Under that order, women disappeared from the public square and from the education system, to remain confined in their homes and prohibited from any social interaction with their peers; Muslims who missed prayer time were arrested and lashed, and everything was decided by Mullah 'Umar, who except for religious books on *Shari'a* had never read anything or known or understood much with regard to the world. Egypt is fortunately different, for it encompasses a thick stratum of educated bourgeois urbanites which would not permit such obscurantist clerics to rule them, but one ought not to overlook the contrary trends either. For example, the incredibly obtuse event of the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan under the Taliban, despite the entire world's protests, comes to mind again as there are clerics who demand the elimination of the pyramids in Giza as the only way to uproot the pagan worship of those giant structures of today. For Islam is bound to attribute the ancient pharaonic civilization to that black hole that preceded Muhammed, called *Jahiliyya* (the Era of Ignorance), which the Prophet had labored to uproot and to replace by the Muslim message. That symbol of paganism had been threatened before by Saudi and *Salafi* scholars who urged to cover it with wax for insulation, or to destroy it totally. A Bahraini scholar, abdul Latif Mahmud, has already applied to President Mursi to order the destruction of the pyramids, arguing that Umar ibn al-'As, one of the Prophet's companions, and the conqueror

of Egypt to Islam and its first governor (641), had in his time destroyed pre-Islamic sites, including the Great Alexandria Library which included some collections of knowledge not recognized by Islam, and he even tried to destroy the pyramids, but he desisted only in the face of the huge manual labor that would have involved, for lack of modern destruction means. Therefore, he argued, it befitted Mursi to do it. Incidentally, it was at the time of the Muslim Mamluks that the Sphynx, "the guard of the Pyramids," lost its nose, during shooting exercises with the new invention of cannon fire. So, the fear is hovering over Egypt that if the new rulers of Egypt wish to complete the islamization of their country, they could definitely follow in the footsteps of their Taliban and Mamluk predecessors, or even wish to emulate the Prophet himself who conquered the pagan temple of the Ka'ba and turned it into a mosque, and all the Muslim conquerors through all generations, who converted Christian and Jewish places of worship into mosques.

In a news item from August 2012,[14] Mursi was said to support the idea of forming a national council to oversee state and private media. During the radio program "The people ask and the President answers," Mursi said that media figures should be more transparent in how they report news and should also be committed to a higher standard of ethics in journalism. "I know that media figures support what's in the best interests of the nation," Mursi said, adding that he is sure the Egyptian media will attain a higher level of quality in the coming period, while still leaving room for different viewpoints. All this sounds like a straightforward civil reform, but since prominent figures in the Muslim Brotherhood had complained on several occasions about media bias against Muslim fundamentalists, particularly as the Brotherhood became salient in the political arena after the January 2011 revolution, concerns regarding a Brotherhood stranglehold over media have risen after Brotherhood member Salah Abdel Maqsoud was named the new information and telecommunications minister. The Brotherhood-dominated *Shura* Council (the upper house of Parliament) was also responsible for selecting the new editors-in-chief of state-run newspapers, like the prestigious *al-Ahram*, despite objections from journalists and activists over the potential for bias in the selection process.

While independent papers claim that the new shuffle is a part of the Muslim Brotherhood's ongoing attempts to islamize the state, state-owned papers just mention the names of the new top editors without commentary.

The most prestigious state-run daily *Al-Ahram* daily listed the new appointees for the state-run papers[15]: Several of the new editors named by the *Shura* Council, the upper house of Egypt's Parliament, have Islamist leanings, which raised concerns over the Muslim Brotherhood's alleged attempt to monopolize state-owned papers. Privately owned daily *Youm7* states that the Brotherhood is following in the footsteps of the dissolved National Democratic Party by seeking to control state media's editorial policies. A number of editors and journalists issued a statement calling on columnists to publish blank opinion articles in protest against appointing the group's loyalists to key media positions. While almost all the column spaces for independent papers, like *Youm7*, *Al-Watan*, and *Al-Tahrir,* were left unwritten on a given day, but signed "in protest of the Brotherhood's attempts to control press and media," unsurprisingly, state-owned columnists did not respond to the call. Independent paper *Al-Shorouk* wrote that the press leaders also agreed on forming a bloc to confront the rigid stance of the Brotherhood with regard to taking the same strong grip over state's publications that Mubarak's old regime once exercised.

Reporting in the same vein, privately owned daily *Al-Dostour* wrote that tens of journalists from both independent and state-run papers staged a protest in front of the *Shura* Council. They have called for the replacement of the new editors and the resignation of the head of Journalists' Syndicate, Mamdouh el-Wali, who is affiliated with the Brotherhood. *Freedom and Justice paper,* the mouthpiece of the Muslim Brotherhood's political party, allocated a two-page spread for the biographical information of the newly appointed editors along with the history of each newspaper. The long feature is published under the headline, "National Papers in a New Dress." The news of the Egyptian army killing Sinai militants in response to the border brutal assault was also highlighted in the papers. The Liberal Party paper *Al-Wafd* shared identical headlines with *Al-Shorouk:* "The Army Starts the Revenge Battle for Martyrs." However, there were discrepancies in the reported figures. While *Al-Shorouk* stated that military forces killed twenty militants in a series of raids in the Sinai region bordering Israel, *Al-Wafd* wrote that the death toll for the attack rose to hundred. The Egyptian air raids were a strike back after gunmen attacked several security checkpoints in the Sinai Peninsula a week earlier, killing sixteen Egyptian security officers. *Al-Shorouk* quoted an anonymous military source as saying that "The attack succeeded in arresting 15 terrorists, injuring tens

and destroying three armored cars belonging to militants." Finally, the independent daily *Al-Tahrir* published a feature on President Mohammed Mursi's order to force the head of intelligence, Murad Muwafi, to retire in the wake of the Egypt-Israel border attack. Abdel Wahed Shehata has been appointed as the interim head of General Intelligence instead.

One more reason to worry about freedom of the press (not that under Mubarak it was any better; it was just that the promise of improvement did not seem to materialize) was the reported charges of "sedition" against the editor of a paper for "insulting" President Muhammed Mursi. *Al-Dostour's* website reported that early morning security forces came to the paper's offices to confiscate some of its issues. MENA reported that investigations into the newspaper had been opened after people accused the newspaper of "fueling sedition," and "harming the president through phrases and wording punishable by law." Gamal Fahmy, a member of the Journalists' Syndicate, told *Al-Dostour* that the investigation was part of a Muslim Brotherhood scheme to limit press freedoms. Other press freedom advocates condemned the raid, saying the Brotherhood was moving to silence its critics. "What happened this morning is a new attempt to impose hegemony, domination and exclusion on those in conflict with the group," said Saeed Ziauddin Garhi, legal advisor for the Justice Center for Freedoms. Earlier in August 2012, *Al-Faraeen* Satellite TV channel, owned by the famous TV personality and former parliamentary candidate Tawfiq Okasha, was shut down, due to charges that the TV host incited viewers to attempt to assassinate Mursi. *Al-Dostour* had also been controversial under former President Hosni Mubarak, when in 2010 the mogul publisher sacked editor-in-chief Ibrahim Eissa, an outspoken government dissident. Many claimed that the publisher had fired Eissa under direct pressure from the regime.

Qindil was appointed by Mursi as prime minister and was charged with improving security and the livelihoods of Egyptians in the space of several months. For weeks after Mursi took office on June 30, the Egyptian media had surmised that he would pick a premier from a list of better known candidates, who would satisfy a mercurial coalition of allies that had reluctantly supported his election. The choice of the technocrat Qindil disappointed Mursi's secular allies, the more so because the new premier may, like Mursi, be a Muslim Brother. On social networking sites, Qindil was said to be so devout that he banned his children from listening to Western music, and that he did not even own a television. Such gossip is

impossible to verify, but it is a sign of suspicion toward Mursi, who barely won the election after many voters also supported his rival, former Mubarak premier Ahmed Shafiq, in an attempt to block the Muslim fundamentalists from office.

For years the Egyptians have been trying to erode the Sinai force restrictions set in the peace treaty they signed with Israel. Those force restrictions were a necessary condition for Israel agreeing to restore the Sinai to Egyptian control. But it turns out that many Egyptians, who had accepted the restrictions under duress, for otherwise there would have been no Israeli withdrawal, now see the force restrictions as impinging on their sovereignty, while Israel always considers the restrictions as critical for the Jewish State's national security. Now, with the Muslim Brotherhood leading Egypt, the troops' restrictions may be needed even more than ever. But now, after having authorized temporarily the entrance of extra forces in order to battle against terrorism, which now threatens Egypt no less than Israel, the latter finds itself with massive Egyptian forces deployed literally on its border. And as Arab affairs expert Ehud Yaari has noted, "we now have no idea if those tanks, attack helicopters, mobile artillery pieces, etc. are going to actually be moved back in a few days." This is the time, then, for the establishment of a very clear timetable for when this equipment is going to be removed from the area, if it is to be removed. One has to specify nonetheless that under the treaty, the Egyptians can put as many cops as they want near the border, and the quality and training of those cops is at the discretion of Egypt. Therefore, Egypt can bring to the border large forces of police (with or without quotation marks), but what is verifiable are the weapons they can bear. This means that after the days of the mopping-up operations have elapsed, Israel must insist that those forces be evacuated, lest they confirm the old adage that in the Middle East nothing is more permanent than the provisory. But for now, the Mursi government seems firm and intent in its battle against terrorism, something that has shown some positive results for Israel too, hence the latter's patience with those reinforcements.

When Mursi dismissed the top brass of the defense establishment, and appointed both Defense Minister Tantawi and COS Anan as his advisers, presumably in order not to alienate them and set them against him, he also appointed Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as defense minister and head of the armed forces. Spokesperson Yasser Ali also announced that Mursi canceled the

supplement to the Constitutional Declaration, which was passed by the SCAF on June 17 and limited the president's powers. Ali said that the supplement would be replaced with Article 25 of the original Constitutional Declaration passed by popular referendum in March 2011, which stipulated that once a civilian president was elected, the SCAF's powers would be transferred to the president. Mursi also ruled that if the work of the Constituent Assembly is impeded for any reason, he would form a new Constituent Assembly to prepare a new constitution within three months from the date of its formation. In addition, parliamentary elections are to be held within two months of the day the new constitution is approved. Ali also announced that SCAF member Mohamed al-Assar was appointed deputy defense minister and head of naval forces. Mohab Mamish, also a SCAF member, was appointed head of the Suez Canal Authority, one of the main sources of foreign currency income of impoverished Egypt. Both Tantawi and Anan, in addition to earning the title of advisers, also got the Nile Medal, the highest state honor in Egypt. Mursi also appointed Mahmoud Mekki, a judge, as his vice president. Significant was also Mursi's meeting with Iranian Vice President Hamid Baghaei in August 2012,[16] which was the highest-level official contact between the nations in decades, until the later travel of Mursi to Tehran to attend the Conference of the Non-Aligned where he harshly criticized Syria, Iran's ally and protégé. This also perhaps signals a new era in Egyptian diplomacy, the like of which Prime Minister Erbakan of Turkey had initiated in the 1990s and lost his post as he was outlawed as a result, and also similar to the rapprochement Erdogan had attempted in the 2000s after he acceded to power, but was interrupted in his endeavor by the Syrian crisis in which he remains divided from Tehran. This meeting in the midst of the difficulties Mursi has been facing domestically gave Iran a diplomatic encouragement amid sharpening international pressure over its nuclear program and its links to Syria. It came as Egypt's new Islamic president looks to gradually reshape, as it seems, the pro-American policies of toppled leader Hosni Mubarak, to reflect political shifts brought by the Islamic Spring revolts. His brief meeting in the Egyptian capital did not produce any breakthroughs, but it was symbolic. Formal relations between the two countries were broken after the Iranian Revolution and Egypt's 1979 peace treaty with Israel. Mubarak had rebuffed Iran's efforts in recent years to

restore full diplomatic ties, although lower-level talks between officials were occurring.

Baghaei's stopover came at a pivotal time for both nations, regarding Israel. Israel has suggested it might attack Iran's nuclear program, which it believes is aimed at developing a bomb and which Tehran says is purely for civilian purposes. At the same time, Mursi, who is also loathe, as a Sunni leader, to see the Shi'ite power going nuclear, has also been under pressure from Israel and the United States to improve security in the Sinai Peninsula after recent attempts by militants to infiltrate Israel and to hit it by terrorist acts from the outside. Egyptian forces said their air strikes had killed about twenty suspected extremists earlier, after militants ambushed a string of army checkpoints. The state news agency reported that soldiers, backed by helicopter gunships, targeted "terrorist hotbeds" in El Arish and around the Rafah border crossing into the Gaza Strip. The deterioration of security in the Sinai had prompted Mursi to fire Egypt's intelligence chief and the governor of north Sinai, or simply to seize those events as the pretext to do what he had intended in any case, namely to dismiss the high command in order to tighten his grip on the armed forces The shake-up also included Mursi asking Defense Minister Mohamed Hussein Tantawi to dismiss the commander of the nation's military police, who had been criticized for human rights violations and crackdowns on democracy activists. It is unlikely that Sunni Muslim-dominated Egypt's relationship with Shi'ite Muslim-controlled Iran will change significantly in the short term. The secular Egyptian military, which receives about $1.3 billion in US aid, still holds considerable influence over the security and foreign policy in Egypt, and Mursi has promised that Cairo would honor international treaties, including its peace deal with Israel.

Mursi, a conservative Muslim who ran as a candidate for the Muslim Brotherhood, has also been careful not to strain relations with Sunni Persian Gulf countries that had accused Iran of instigating Shi'ite Muslim protests in Bahrain and in eastern Saudi Arabia. The Saudi monarchy had strong bonds to Mubarak and has long been suspicious of the Brotherhood's Islamist populism. Mursi's first international trip as president was to Riyadh, the Saudi capital. Saudi Arabia holds billions of dollars in potential aid for Cairo, which is facing shortages of electricity and water, even bread, and dwindling foreign financial reserves. "The U.S. would not be happy if Egypt improved relations with Iran; neither would the gulf countries," said

Emad Gad, an analyst at *Al Ahram* Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo. “Mursi does not have it in him at this point to defy these strategic allies, especially since he needs their support and aid.” Iran has hailed Mursi’s presidency as Egypt’s “Islamic awakening.” It has turned to Cairo as its own regional stature is under duress from economic sanctions and political upheavals that have reconfigured the Arab world. Syrian President Bashar Assad, Iran’s reliable proxy, has been weakened by months of protests and bloody insurgency. If Assad is overthrown or relinquishes power, Tehran could lose an ally in its maneuverings in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, which is governed by the militant group Hamas. The Muslim Brotherhood, which inspired the founding of Hamas, has been urging closer relations with Iran. But many Egyptian clerics have been opposed to strengthening ties, given the historical animosity between Sunnis and Shi’ites. Baghaei’s mission in Cairo was to invite Mursi to a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in August 2012 in Tehran. The visit was preceded by controversy in June when Iran’s *Fars News Agency* reported that Mursi was keen to improve relations with Tehran. Mursi denied that he had ever spoken to the agency and his office said the president had not committed to the NAM summit. Ultimately he did participate, but it is doubtful whether his firm condemnation of Assad there has contributed anything to improving the Cairo–Tehran relationship.

Mursi faced more pressing problems in August as the Egyptian military expanded into the Sinai in an offensive dubbed Operation Eagle. The air strikes against the militants, the first by Egyptian forces in the peninsula since the 1970s, indicated that Cairo was moving to restore stability to the lawless desert region, not to please Israel’s desire for quiet on its borders or to yield to American pressures, but to avenge the death of its murdered soldiers during Ramadan, and to signal to the terrorist niches that have been built there that they cannot challenge his rule and sovereignty over that peninsula the way they did with Mubarak. The government said a joint police-military operation would “regain control” over militants who have grown bolder in arms and human traffickers. The trouble in the Sinai has led to new calls for a wider Egyptian military presence, while under the 1979 peace treaty, much of the region was designated as demilitarized. Before Mubarak was toppled in early 2011, Egypt increased the number of lightly armed troops in the region. Now, as Mursi declared war on Palestinian border smuggling tunnels,[17] the military has begun to destroy

them systematically under the Sinai–Gaza border to stop infiltrators and smuggling. The work started with the tunnels far from the border town of Rafah, most of which are now shut down. The crackdown is part of the military response to the militants' attack on the Egypt-Israeli border in early August which has spurred violence that has continued throughout the succeeding week in Sinai.

Locals in Sinai said there are about one thousand two hundred tunnels between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. Some of these underground corridors have been developed recently for vehicles that run on tracks and are pulled by machinery including cranes. The tunnels also have ventilation openings and communication devices to link people inside to the outside, facilitating the transfer of goods to Gaza. The tunnels belong to families and individuals on both sides of the border. These people depend on them as a source of income, despite cooperation between Rafah residents and security forces in combating this phenomenon. The tunnel-clearing operation comes at the same time the military and police are attacking armed militias in the Sinai with the aid of *Apache* helicopters. This campaign continued for a few consecutive days in Sheikh Zuwayed and Rafah, both of which are south of the north Sinai capital of al-Arish. Those tunnels have been there for years, but despite Mubarak's bombast that Egypt would build, with American aid, iron screens going deep into the earth to block any tunneling activity, it went on undisturbed. The rhetoric around it also grew ludicrous: people on both sides of the border, just like drug growers and traffickers, first indulge in illegal activity, and then when the authorities finally wake up to deprive them of that, they claim that their livelihoods depend on that. Poor creatures! They deserve as much compassion as the son who kills his father and then claims compassion to his miserable condition as an orphan.

A comprehensive summary of the saga of the ascension of the Brotherhood to power in Egypt can be found in an article published in July 2012, the main points of which are cited here.[18] Most striking was Mursi's inauguration speech, where he seemed to commit himself to international treaties and agreements, declaring himself carrying a message of peace to the world. The authors estimate that it accords neatly with the Brotherhood's sophisticated strategy for dealing with outsiders. They cite Mustafa Mashhur, the guide of the Brothers from 1996 to 2006, who explained in his *Jihad Is the Way* his movement's beliefs and aspirations, especially the role of violent Jihad in bringing about a world under a unified

Islamic caliphate. These references, which are true to what al-Banna himself had written in the 1930s in the beginning of the movement, give reason to doubt Mursi's reassurances. For one thing, *Jihad Is the Way* defined Israel and Israelis as "the criminal, thieving gangs of Zion," and Mashhur stressed that the notion of Israel's foundation on stolen land is not an opening position for negotiations, but a nonnegotiable article of "faith and religion." Further, he claimed that the land was stolen not only from Palestinian Arabs but from Islam; in his words: "Know that the problems of the Islamic world, such as Palestine. . . are not issues of territories and nations, but of faith and religion. They are problems of Islam and the Muslims, and they cannot be resolved by negotiation," words that are echoed by the Charter of the Hamas, which is also an adept of the Brotherhood. Mashhur explained that "*Jihad* and preparation for *jihad* are not only for the purpose of fending-off assaults and attacks against Muslims by Allah's enemies, but are also for the purpose of realizing the great task of establishing an Islamic state, strengthening the religion, and spreading it around the world." Like Banna who exalted jihad and martyrdom, and like the Hamas who glorifies them in its charter, Mashhur writes that "Martyrdom for Allah, is our most exalted wish," and Mursi never rejected this ideology. So how are these contradictions to be understood? Why does Mursi talk peace when he supposedly adheres to an ideology of jihad war?

The answer lies in the fundamental principles of the Muslim Brotherhood, principles largely overlooked in the West. As opposed to the ideology of al-Qa'ida, which preaches continuous confrontation and attacks on infidels regardless of the immediate political costs, the Brotherhood, contend the authors, places the highest priority on careful preparation and the strategic timing of political and military activity. *Jihad Is the Way* stresses the necessity of timing the eventual *jihad* prudently; as a proof text, it cites a Qur'anic passage in which Muhammed does not rush to fight until the timing is right. When the Muslims were a persecuted minority, the Prophet Muhammed did not instruct the Muslims to retaliate. Instead, he taught them "*Sabr*" patience and resilience, and when the conditions were right, permission was given to fight. Timing, therefore, is an integral part of the Brotherhood's political and military decision-making. Indeed, when the *Brotherhood* sends their youth to *jihad* at the appropriate time, they are not pushing them toward self-destruction. Rather, they contend that abstaining from *jihad* at its appropriate time is destruction. Similarly, it is not

necessary for the Muslims to repel every attack or damage caused by the enemies of Allah immediately, rather only when their ability and the appropriate circumstances allow for it.

In this context, Mursi's statements looked more like stratagems, unless he holds some stunning surprises of an ideological turnaround occasioned by his assumption of the duty of president, which made him look at events in a slightly more responsible and moderate way than when he was a mere ideologue. Moreover, pretending to stand by Egypt's international commitments after he was elected did not preclude war later; and assurances of peaceful intent did not jettison *jihad* from his agenda altogether—in fact, as far as the Brotherhood was concerned, it advanced that cause, argued the authors. Mursi did not have to change his opinions, nor did he have to reject the Brotherhood's fundamental beliefs when he spoke of peace. Since nullifying its treaty with Israel might have isolated Egypt politically and brought it economic ruin, Mursi could instead apply the Brotherhood's principle, as learned from Muhammed: *"Sabr"* namely patience and resilience. The necessity to strengthen and stabilize Egyptian society was an adequate priority; it was moreover the very means by which to prepare Egypt to lead the Islamic world and to fulfill Islam's global destiny. Peaceful statements released from Egypt over the years should not deceive observers into believing that the Brotherhood had abandoned its religious ideology and its comprehensive Islamic vision. Talking peace, while preparing for *jihad,* is an integral part of *jihad.* So, when Egypt broke its treaty with "the criminal, thieving gangs of Zion," Mursi will make the same calculation as Muhammed: when conditions are right.

Another view, along the same lines by noted columnist Mordechai Kedar,[19] described the history of the Brothers in some very sharp points worth mentioning. It was when the British ruled Egypt after World War I and tried to influence it to westernize that local reactions to those endeavors found expression in the public square. One of them viewed the pharaonic heritage as reflecting the national character of Egypt; others saw the Arab nation (of Muslims, Christians, Jews, and others, all of whom spoke Arabic) as the province of affiliation; and there were also those who saw the Greek (Alexander the Great, Ptolemy) and the Roman past as the source of European identity of the Egyptian people. All of these trends were anti-Islamic, and the Brotherhood headed by the founder of the movement, Hassan Al-Banna, saw the occupation by the Christian, wine-drinking and

pork-eating British, as the source of all the cultural problems of the Land of the Nile, so they placed the struggle against the foreign occupation at the top of their priorities, and as a secondary task the purification of Egyptian society from the influence of Western culture, which in their opinion was rotten, corrupt, permissive, and not suitable to Islamic society. The struggle over the course the culture ought to follow placed the Brotherhood in conflict with the new sociopolitical theories that debated the source of collective inspiration of the Egyptian people, which ought to be followed. In answer to all of these trends, the Brotherhood claimed that "Islam is the solution," for it was forbidden for a Muslim society, whose guide is on high, to search among other cultures for solutions and arrangements that are the mere works of man.

The third task that the Brotherhood took upon itself was to prove that indeed "Islam is the solution," by imposing Islamic *Shari'a* in all spheres of life, private, family, political, economic, and diplomatic. This task, which aspires to impose the rules of Islam on politics and the state, has created the concept of "political Islam" in contrast to other religions, which separate between religion and state. The symbol of the organization expresses this ideology well: the color of green represents Paradise and the favorite color of the Prophet, two swords in the center express the two basic avowals of Islam—there is no god but Allah, and Muhammed is his Messenger—and one word, which appears in the Qur'an just once, written above: "Wa-aidu" (and prepare). This word is the beginning of the passage from the Qur'an[20]"and prepare whatever you can of your strength and your harnessed horses in order to impose fear *(irhab,* i.e., terror) in the hearts of Allah's enemy and your enemies." When the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt, King Fuad the First ruled, and in 1936 his son Farouk succeeded him, and ruled until the Officers' Revolution in July 1952 overturned him. During the monarchy, the Brotherhood acted very freely, because the regime was incredibly ineffective. In December 1948 an activist from the movement assassinated the prime minister, Nukrashi, and two months afterward the movement's founder and leader, Hassan al-Banna, was murdered, apparently by agents of the regime.

The Officers' Regime was much more determined and decisive and, in general, conducted a stubborn battle against the Brotherhood because it saw them and their activities as an attempt to undermine its legitimacy and stability. In 1966 President Gamal Abd al-Nassar hung the ideologue of the

movement, Sayyid Qutb, because in his writings, he claimed that any regime that does not implement *Shari'a* is like the heresy *(Jahiliyya)* that preceded Islam, or idol worship, and therefore justifies a jihad against it. Because the Brotherhood was marginalized politically during the years of the Officers' Regime, they found their fertile field of activity within the economically and politically marginalized people and turned their energies to charitable activities within the society of the tens of millions of Egyptians living in the poor, chaotic neighborhoods at the margins of the cities, without running water, without sewage, without electricity, without telephone lines, without medical services or educational services, without work, and without hope. It was the Brotherhood who supported these miserable people for years, out of a feeling of commitment, responsibility, and mutual trust rooted in Islamic values, which did not differentiate between religion, society, politics, economics, and culture. The regime allowed them to operate among the weak neighborhoods, since it did not see acts of charity and kindness as a danger to the stability of the regime, and because the burden on the state of caring for the poor population was eased thanks to the Brotherhood's activities.

The people held the Brotherhood in high regard, because for many years, it supported the poor among the people wholeheartedly and because the Brotherhood did not appear as corrupt and greedy as the "fat cats" who ruled the state. Moreover, the Brothers related to the people with respect, unlike the officials of the system who humiliated them and oppressed them cruelly. Those who initiated the street riots that broke out in Egypt on January 25, 2011, which some call the "Arab Spring," were throngs of Egyptian secular youth, some of whom were educated, who were sick of the corrupt and cruel regime, which was slated to be passed down to the son of the ruler. The Muslim Brotherhood did not take a meaningful part in the demonstrations at first, but rather sat on the sidelines watching to see which side would win. After the military forced Mubarak to resign on February 11, the Brotherhood went out to al-Tahrir Square in order to take advantage of the opportunities that it had awaited patiently for many years. The Qur'an states that "Allah is with the patient,"[21] and indeed Allah is with them: in the period that preceded the November 2011 elections to Parliament, the Brotherhood activated Operation Da'wah' (Islamic outreach), in order to translate their investment of years of community

efforts into political support by the public (just like Obama in the Chicago area).

Spokesmen of political Islam, headed by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, mobilized themselves in support of the Brotherhood, and the result was that almost half of the seats of Parliament were won by the "Party of Freedom and Justice," the representative of the Brotherhood, and a quarter more of the seats were won by the "Party of Light" *(al-Noor)*, the representative of the more conservative *Salafi* groups. This is how the decisive majority of the Egyptian Parliament was suffused with the color green, the color of the Islamic Paradise, in a truly democratic way. It is important to note here that one of the most eloquent spokesmen of the Brotherhood, Sheikh Safwat Higazi, appeared on May 1, 2012, and gave a speech that was broadcast live for thousands of people to see and to hear, as part of the Brotherhood's preparations for the presidential elections. In his fiery discourse, Higazi announced that the goal of the Brotherhood was the unity of all the Arab states into one giant Islamic caliphate, under Mursi's flag, whose capital will be "not Mecca and not Medina but al-Quds [Jerusalem]." His words reflect very well the goal of the movement—to erase the heritage of colonialism, principally the borders marked by colonialist interests, which damaged both the Arab world and Islam; the elimination of Israel; and the imposition of Islam on Judaism. It might be that this refers to a far-off hope and not to immediate plans, but the cheers of support from the throats of the masses who crowded into the street expressed the collective energy behind the idea, just waiting for the suitable moment to turn it into reality. Besides this, Israel must take very seriously the hopes of others, because the state of Israel is exactly the realization of such hopes, and its enemies learn from it how to realize hopes as well.

A new turn in the relations between the Islamic world and the West was marked on the eleventh anniversary of September 11, when a large coordinated attack on the American Consulate in Benghazi by forces of al-Qa'ida and their affiliates burned down the embassy, killed the Ambassador who happened to visit, and decimated in arson the entire consulate and its attached property. The official trigger of that heinous attack was an idiotic film made by a private individual, a Copt in exile in America, which grossly mistreated the figure of the Prophet Muhammed, which is deeply venerated in Islam. Although it is clear that the attack must have been prepared months before that film was made and distributed, it was easy to incite the

ready-to-explode Muslim crowds, from Casablanca to Jakarta, with anything that smacks anti-Americanism. Indeed, American (and also British and German) embassies were attacked in several Arab and Muslim countries, from Africa to the Far East, and fierce and violent demonstrations erupted in many Muslim cities, chanting anti-Western slogans and burning foreign flags, notably American and Israeli. It is noteworthy that precisely Cairo, which had been chosen by Obama to "engage" the Muslims and "Open a new page" with them at the beginning of his term, when his ally Mubarak still ruled the place, has been taken over by the MB, who proved unable (and perhaps also unwilling) to prevent the attacks on the American Embassy.

Although all Muslims who commented on this new outburst of maddened fury attribute this string of violent acts to that film, it is worth mentioning that prior to September 11, there was no such film to provoke this new repeat of the 2005-06 drama of the cartoons in Denmark. And since the lessons were not learned there, the same scenario was bound to be repeated, and will be replayed more and more in the future due to the basic religious, legal, and cultural disagreements between Islam and the West about freedom of expression and creation, tolerance of others and their ideas and religions, the separation between church and state, the self-confidence of the culture and its readiness to compete with others in the open market, and the extent to which any democratic country can interfere with and be held responsible for the noncriminal acts of its nationals. Muslim countries have been trying to impose universally, via the UN and other international bodies, their own norms of morality and respect for religions that they themselves do not respect: for example, enormous demonstrations and protests are raised by Muslims in the West when they are not afforded enough facilities for their prayers, while Saudi Arabia, which finances most Muslim installations in the West, does not permit any non-Muslim house of prayer on its land. If, for example, the West had made the building of new mosques conditional on opening Saudi Arabia to the same freedoms of worship of all religions, the situation might be amended.

In summer 2013, when Defense Minister Sisi, Mursi's appointee, realized where Mursi was taking Egypt on the one hand, much to the delight of the supporters of the Brothers among the rural and less educated population, and the building discontent among the liberal and Westernized urban population on the other, he decided to move, arrested the elected

president, removed him from power, and ultimately put him to trial, and initiated a new referendum to change the constitution once again and have himself elected as the new president one year later (summer 2014). Mursi's supporters domestically and radical Muslim countries like Turkey condemned his removal as a "coup," a thesis that the United States too subscribed to with all the attending strain in the relationships with Egypt, while Sisi's partisans hailed his counterrevolution as a salutary demarche which was necessary to return sanity and pragmatism to Egypt. The one-year eventful experiment of MB rule came to a close, but the nagging question remained: "how was it possible that within the space of one year the same Egyptian public voted overwhelmingly for Mursi and then his constitution in 2012, and then for Sisi and his constitution in 2013? Something was definitely wrong or strange in the workings of that "democracy."

Since World War II the Brothers, who have strengthened their positions in Europe through political and cultural activities, by such personalities as Tariq Ramadan, the grand-son of Hassan al-Banna, who is based in Geneva and has been recognized as one of the prominent intellectuals of Europe, and by such organizations as CAIR in the United States, which has gained access to many avenues of power in Washington, have also been struggling in the Muslim world to reinforce their positions, mostly as opposition to the existing regimes, and more rarely as partners in the government. In Egypt, their birth place, they came to power by free elections for one year (2012–13) after the toppling of Mubarak in the Arab Spring, but they were reversed by the military. In Jordan they were part of the government coalition for a few years under King Hussein, before election reforms restricted their constituencies. The Nahda Party in Tunisia, and its parallels in Algeria and Morocco, acted also as branches of the Brothers, though under different names. Among the Palestinian population the Muslim Associations, which grew out of the early cells of the MB, were renamed Hamas during the First Intifadah (1987–92) and gained currency among their people by brandishing the double banner of Islam and Palestinian nationalism, as if there were no built-in contradiction between the two. In Israel, the Muslim Movement, especially its northern branch under Sheikh Ra'id Salah, generally toed the line of the Jordanian Brothers. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Gulf donors also maintained for decades their financial and spiritual support to the Brothers, with Qatar in particular, which gave

shelter to Sheikh Qaradawi and allows him its *Al Jazeera* network as a channel for his worldwide Islamic *da'wa*, actively endorsing the organization and its bids to take over power in some Arab countries, provided its Emir remained outside the scope of the Islamic propaganda worldwide. So much so that the other Gulf states, fearing that Qatar's protection and support for the Brothers undermined their own monarchic regimes, have resented Doha and cut diplomatic relations with it in 2014.[22]

In November 2014, fearing its growing isolation in the Gulf area, Qatar agreed to conform to the regional consensus, plastered over its differences with the other emirates of the Gulf, and its ambassadors returned to UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. That was allowed following an unannounced meeting between GCC leaders that ended on November 17 after resolving a long-standing schism with fellow member-state Qatar, *Al Arabiya News* Channel's correspondent reported. The assembly reached an agreement that "promises the opening of a new page that will present a strong base, especially in light of the sensitive circumstances the region is undergoing," the GCC said in a joint statement. Additionally, the annual GCC summit was also confirmed to take place from December 9 to 10 in Doha, the correspondent reported. The leaders, who traveled with their foreign ministers and other cabinet members or senior officials, were greeted by Crown Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz al-Saud and GCC Secretary General Abdullatif al-Zayani, according to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA). Kuwait's Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah has been leading efforts to bridge the gap between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. The spat was instigated by Qatar's support of certain movements and groups that stirred unrest in some states, said Khaled al-Matrafi, regional manager of *Al Arabiya News* Channel in Riyadh. These groups, which adopted "orientations and policies that opposed those of the GCC, posed the most major points of conflict and led to the withdrawal of the ambassadors," he said. Most important of all, Doha asked Brotherhood leaders to leave Qatar earlier this year following diplomatic pressure from Saudi Arabia.[23]

Notes

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Matthias Kuntzel, *Jihad and Jew-hatred, Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11* (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2007). Much of the following discussion is based on the first chapter of this book.

See R. Israeli, *Muslim Anti-Semitism in Christian Europe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2010), especially Chapter 1.

- See Jeffrey Herf’s splendid Introduction to Kuntzel’s book.
- Kuntzel, Jihad and Jew-hatred, Islamism, Nazism, 40-48.
- Ibid., 50.
- See R. Israeli, *From Arab Spring to Islamic Winter* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2013).
- MENA, September 8, 2012.
- Appointments for state-run papers: Abdel Naser Salama for *Al-Ahram,* Mohamed Hassan al-Bana for *Akhbar Al-Youm,* Suleiman Qenawy for *Al-Akhbar,* Gamal Abdel Raheem for *Al-Gomhurriya,* Shaker Gamal Eddin for the *Middle East News Agency* (MENA), and Essam Abdel Aziz for *Rose al-Youssef* magazine. Several of the new editors named Wednesday by the Shura Council, the upper house of Egypt’s Parliament, have Islamist leanings, which raised concerns over the Muslim Brotherhood’s alleged attempt to monopolize state-owned papers. Salama, who now heads the state’s flagship paper Al-Ahram, wrote a column against Pope Shenouda in 2010, accusing him of provoking sectarian strife between Muslims and Christians. It is also alleged that Mohammed Hassan al-

Bana of *Akhbar al-Youm* daily paper is the grandson of the Muslim Brotherhood's founder, Hassan al-Bana.

- *Egypt Daily News,* August 9, 2012.
- *Al-Masry Al-Youm,* September 9, 2012.
- Itamar Marcus, and Nan Jacques Zilberdik, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Patient Jihad," *Jewish Ideas Daily,* July 25, 2012.
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- Chapter 8, 59.
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- For this passage, see Meir Hatina and Uri Kupferschmidt, eds., *The Muslim Brothers: A Religious Vision in a Changing Reality* (Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishers, 2012).
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4

Statehood or Nationalism vs. Caliphate

It is in the nature of things that the universality of the caliphate, a system of government geared to unite all the *umma* of Muslims under one ruler, and to subjugate to Islamic dominion the rest of the world, should clash with the current reality of particular Muslim states, who once they borrowed the idea of nationalism from the West have become its most devoted proponents, if only due to the lust for power of the present rulers. In other words, the restorative idea of the Muslim Brothers and other radical Muslims to revert to the days of the glory of Islam, when it was strong, united, and awesome, has collided head-on with the competing modern idea of nationalism, where each parochial tendency finds its peculiar national expression. Interestingly enough, most of the proponents of the caliphate, like the Muslim Brothers, and the Salafi tendencies of ISIS, Islamic Jihad, and others are of Arab denomination, although Arabs (330 million in 2014) constitute only one-fifth of the world Islamic population (ca. 1.5 billion). That is perhaps the result of Arab ambivalence about nationalism, as they differentiate between ethnic nationalism *(qawmiyyah),* which is made up of speakers of Arabic who hail from the same Arab ancestry, real or imaginary, share the same history, culture, and hatred to the West and the Jews, and territorial nationalism *(wataniyyah)*, the specific attachment to a *patria (watan)* which reflects the parochial identities of certain defined territories, like Syria, Iraq, and Morocco, and/or the lust of current rulers to maintain their power. The *qawmiyyah* concept is close to the idea of the multistate, multiethnic, and multireligious empires of old, like the Byzantine and the Sassanian Empires that the caliphate attempted to emulate at its inception, for lack of original Muslim imperial experience, while the more particular *wataniyyah* hinged on the more limited and more concrete idea of the tribal turf, which was also more readily and concretely perceptible by individuals.

Sensu strictu, we tend to regard nationalism as a militant political movement which articulates the link between man and a particular land, what we usually call “patriotic feeling” (the Arabic *wataniyyah).* But there

are more meanings to patriotism: a policy of national independence, a policy of rescuing industry or other branches of the national economy from the hands of foreigners or of particular interests (by nationalizing them), a chauvinist feeling of narrow and exclusive identity to set us apart from others, or a doctrine that lends precedence to national values over international ones and even provides a particular interpretation of national character and national values. Sometimes, this nationalism can come to be personified in the figure of a charismatic leader (e.g., Gamal abdel Nasser in his time, Yasser Arafat for the Palestinians, or Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for ISIS). Nationalism is also a matter of identity. Man seeks his roots, and he desires to locate the origins of his being in an attempt to determine who he is, particularly in this cosmopolitan world of ours where values and consumer goods have become universalized. At times, man looks for a traumatic moment in his collective past, like a revelation, a myth, a founding father, or some historical cataclysm which helps explain how in the remote past that happening had turned an inanimate material culture, or a haphazard collection of individuals, into a culture, a religion, a history, a civilization, or an ethnic of national group. In the search for those links to the past, people often create their own mythology that lends depth to their history.

The Palestinian national ethos, for example, which took shape within recent memory, has created over the past few years a multifaceted identity that links it, on various levels, to many of the above-mentioned aspects. They create history or rewrite it so as to incorporate in their ancestral background the Canaanites and the Jebusites, at the same time that they refute, lock, stock, and barrel, the entire biblical narrative which links Jews to the land of Israel, archaeological finds and historical accounts notwithstanding. Most significantly, these elements appear in Palestinian writings and thinking not only as the self-defining traits of Palestinian nationalism, but also as the requisites setting them apart from, and often pitting them against, the enemy—Israel, Jews, Zionism, who are perceived as posing a challenge to them and it is to them that Palestinian nationalism feels constrained to respond by creating their own history, mythology, and national symbols. For example, the Canaanite claim, which has no leg to stand on historically and archaeologically, is clearly geared to legitimize the Palestinian title to the land that they claim had been snatched away from them by the Zionist Jews who built modern Israel and who themselves have

based their claim to the land on their line of descent from the biblical Israelites who had conquered it from the Canaanites. Thus, if the Canaanites are neatly established as Palestinian Arabs (including Jesus Christ), then the Jewish experience in the ancient Holy Land, based on aggression and conquest in the first place, becomes a fleeting episode in history, and the Palestinians come a full circle by justly (they demand a "just peace") restoring possession of the land to its original legal owners. Never mind that the entire span of Islamdom today is based on the conquest by Arabian Muslims and destruction of other existing civilizations: the Christian Byzantine that was replaced by the Turkish Muslim invaders; the Sassanian Persian that was replaced by Muslim Iran; and so on with all the vast swaths of medieval territory that were occupied, settled, and islamized. But history began only since the Prophet and islamization of the medieval world and what was before remain inconsequential in Muslim minds.

It is wrong to assume that the aspiration to statehood, which is incrusted in the DNA of the Islamic entity since the establishment of a Muslim state in the *polis* of Medina under the Prophet, necessarily means a well-organized state as we understand it today, based on a voluntary social pact between its citizens and on an egalitarian, fair, honest, democratic, and legal regime. Take ISIS, for example, which from its inception has been based on horror, persecution, fanaticism, murder, robbery, and coercion. The fact that these drawbacks, far from impacting on its popularity, have on the contrary increased it tells more about the inclinations of the fanatics which pursue it and exult in it, than on the fundamental distortions and anomalies built into it. Take, for example, the horrific public executions of subjugated civilians, Muslims and unbelievers alike, which do not deter new recruits, and on the contrary seem to encourage them; or the complaint of a top Iraqi government grains official who announced on November 12, 2014, that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militants were taking wheat from state silos in northern and western Iraq, in order to mill it there and in neighboring Syria. The official, Hassan Ibrahim, Director General of the Grain Board of Iraq, the Trade Ministry body responsible for procuring Iraq's wheat internationally and from local farmers, told *Reuters* that the militants had seized wheat in recent weeks from government silos in the provinces of Nineveh and Anbar. Between forty thousand and fifty thousand tonnes of the crop were taken from the government silos in Tal Afar and Sinjar in Nineveh Province, where hundreds of thousands of

residents, many of them ethnic and religious minorities, have fled from the militant onslaught. Militants seized a further seven hundred tonnes from storage sites in the western province of Anbar the past weeks and months and took them across the border into Islamic State-held areas in Syria for milling, he said. Ibrahim said militants tried to sell wheat stolen from Nineveh back to the government in other provinces. “For this reason I stopped purchasing wheat from farmers since 13 November, 2014,” he added. Iraq’s Grain Board normally stops farmer purchases from the annual harvest at the end of August.[1]

Evidently, modern nationalism, an alien thought to Islam, that was borrowed from the colonial powers which had dismantled the last Ottoman caliphate and divided it among themselves, and then educated their colonized Islamic peoples to the idea of nation-states, gave birth to Arab, Turkish, Persian, and also to Indonesian, Malaysian, Muslim, Hindu, and other nationalisms. But the rise of radical Islam in the past half century has pushed the new nationalists to the collision course with universalistic Islam which demanded an Islamic entity to encompass the entire *umma*, based on the ideal model of the Prophet in Medina, and after his death, on the exemplary rule established by the caliphs, and perpetuated over the centuries by the various Islamic dynasties. Therefore, Muslim eyes have always been turned to the idealized past to seek precedents and objects of emulation, not to some indefinite future utopia that may or may not come to fruition. The Islamic instinct for restorative reforms every time a change or a revolution loomed in the horizon also harks back to the ancient Islamic heritage, with the Prophet at its center, who had combined his prophecy with his temporal rule of Medina, thus creating the perfect model of a ruler by the grace of Allah of the first organized Muslim community. That precedent had been achieved by the most perfect of men and of rulers, who had received via the revealed Quran, the Word of Allah, divine guidance to the ideal way of governance. While during his early prophecy in Mecca, all the verses of the Qur’an that were revealed to him were of an apocalyptic import, predicting on the model of the great Jewish Prophets, that the end of the world was at hand, the moment he migrated to Medina in AD 622 and began serving as the local ruler, the burden of government obliged him to tailor-make new revelations which resembled more the legislative character of Leviticus and Numbers. But once those revelations were sanctified by inclusion in the Qur’an, after the passing of Muhammed, they could no

longer be changed or improved upon, especially after the Prophet himself had followed their guidelines. Since then, those prescriptions of good government have been engraved in stone as the ideal Islamic rule for all generations to come. Ideal, since the Prophet himself practiced them. For, unlike the Prophets of Israel who were giant intellectuals, and usually inimical to the royal rule, and its greatest critiques, Muhammed was himself the ruler, some kind of philosopher-king, who understood the requirements of government and found solutions to them. Moreover, since he practiced that rule under divine inspiration and was himself infallible, his style of government could not have been afflicted by major errors or deviations which would have required redress today. Quite the contrary, pretending to amend today what the most perfect of men had done would have amounted to insulting the wisdom and integrity of the Messenger of Allah.

No wonder, then, that the era of the Prophet has become the perfect model of emulation, both spiritually and politically. Granted that after him no one can claim the gift of prophecy since he was the Seal of Prophets, his tradition *(sunna)* became the ultimate model of emulation, while the greatest scare of all in Islam has been innovation *(bid'a*—doctrinal, not technical). We customarily change things in order to improve upon them, but if it is determined that the best had occurred in the time of the Prophet, then what is the incentive to alter anything? The rationale is that the generations away from the Prophet keep deteriorating. In his time, the Companions *(Sahaba)*, were second in perfection only to the Prophet himself, but their followers *(tabi'uri)* and more so the followers' followers *(tabi'u al-tabi'un)*, and so on *ad infinitum* can only decrease in quality as they get farther from the Prophet's times. Thereupon, people can no longer attain the hereafter thanks to their proximity to the Prophet, but only due to their own piety and good deeds. This is the base for the doctrine that has been adopted especially by the two most puritanical schools of law (the Hanbalites and the Malikites), which reject the *bid'a* and claim that after the worthy men who founded all four schools of law had passed away, the inspiration that had moved them to legislate and innovate was terminated (namely "the gates of *Ijtihad* had been closed"), therefore any innovation after them would be hazardous and against any good counsel.

Hence the precedents and verdicts of the past remain the exclusive reference for any judicious pronouncement, something which obviously precludes any free and open thinking, divine inspiration having been

exhausted on earth. Paradoxically, then, the more the new generations become distanced from the Prophet, and in need for new interpretations to meet the emerging challenges and requirements of new modes of life, the more they are denied any such opportunities and they have to rely on the outdated judgment of the ancients. A classical example is Egypt, which in the 1920s and 1930s was more liberal, open, and democratic than today. Indeed, in these days of the Islamic Spring, as Islamic opinions and sentiments are reasserting themselves, the remnants of the liberal and democratic voices can hardly go on blocking the dam with their thumb to hold the threatening Islamic flood. To this trend there is one major exception, and that is Shi'ite Islam, where the Ayatollahs, due to their ongoing link to the Hidden Imam, can still get divine inspiration. This is what enabled Khomeini to lend innovative interpretations to the rule of the *mullahs*, as part of his *ijtihad* endeavors.

Looking backward at the past and finding in it all sources of wisdom and references to action, all that good and devoted Muslims can strive for today is to attempt to recreate as close a replica as humanly possible, of the time of the Prophet, and this is exactly the meaning of the *salafi* movements, that is, pious Muslims who strive to emulate the ancestors *(aslaf)*, from the generation of the Prophet onward. In Egypt, the Salafiya gained 30 percent of the votes to Parliament and came second only to the Brothers who secured 45 percent of the electorate in the 2012 elections which brought President Mursi to power. These Muslim tendencies profoundly believe that the truth is embedded in the sayings and deeds of their predecessors, and that pretending to improve upon them is blasphemous and a baseless and vain thought. Hence the tremendous magnetic appeal of these movements throughout the Islamic world, which do not advocate any new doctrine, but simply revive the ancient, venerated, but neglected and forlorn precepts which had made the glory of Islam in the past. And unlike the legendary Muslim Brothers, who are equipped with long-term patience and resilience, and invest in welfare to prepare a solid base for their future rule, the *Salafi* movements and their likes (the Algerian Armed Groups of the 1990s, the Egyptian Gama'at of the 1970s and 1980s, the Taliban, al-Qa'ida, and their ilk of the 1990s and 2000s, and ISIS and *Jabhat al-Nusra* of the 2010s) want everything and now, and are often violent in their demand for immediate application of their rule. The Brothers had in the past also embraced that road of impatience and violence in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan,

but when they were crushed by the authorities and risked annihilation, they elected to lower their profile and pretend that they had been moderated, giving the false impression to uninitiated foreign observers that they had indeed changed their ways. But now that Muslim Brothers have gained some legitimacy in some places, as a consequence of the Spring and their temporary rule in Tunisia and Egypt, they will also gradually revive the venomous discourse of their founding fathers, Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, who continue to be deeply venerated throughout the Muslim world, and in practice merge with the *salafis,* there being no significant doctrinal and operational gap between them.

No less detrimental to the obstruction of the future by the past, when considering the era of the Prophet as the best of regimes which ruled the most perfect of societies, has been the pessimistic state of mind this creates among Islamic peoples, when they grow to believe that the best was and is gone, and is irretrievable, therefore things can only get worse. This does not encourage effort for betterment, initiative, entrepreneurship, but a spirit of fatalism and doom which leaves the individual Muslim apathetic, lacking in incentive to move and change, and not attaching hopes to learning, science, and advancement. Even as the Islamic Spring proceeds, we watch the rebels against their tyrants not only cursing their oppressors and striving to remove them from power, but also doing that in the name of Allah, shouting war cries of *Allah Akbar* (Allah is the greatest!) in response to their bombardment and shelling by their rulers' artillery and jet fighters. This means they leave the revolution in the hands of God, while they, who expose themselves on the fire line, are only tools in His hands. It is doubtful whether Lenin or Mao could have achieved their grand revolutions if they had counted on any god instead of taking matters into their own hands, and risking their lives and the fate of their nations in the name of the alternative ideologies they pursued.

The Islamic revolutionary zeal evinced these days by the radical movements throughout the Islamic world stands in contrast to the passivity and fatalism that are current in the Muslim world. The pessimistic view that all has been decided from above also stands at the foundation of the annual UN reports on social and economic development, which have invariably cast the Muslim countries at the bottom of the world scale, in spite of the fact that these surveys are made by Arab and Muslim scholars who know and understand this hopeless situation. For otherwise this observation

would have smacked of “Islamophobia” on the part of non-Muslim scholars who would be accused of ill-intent in condemning Islam. In these annual surveys, the same sad themes are recurrent: this built-in chronic backwardness is due to Islam and its ramifications, namely the status of women, the lack of human rights, the frustrated yearning for freedom, and the Islamic form of government. The young people who have risen in rebellion in the 2011 Spring are aiming specifically at battling illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, and sickness, which only if eliminated could salvage the situation. Paradoxically, however, the desperate people who ignited the rebellions, while shouting from the top of their lungs “Democracy!,” have often also supported the success of the Islamic parties, whose regressive views and worship of the past have precisely helped to generate this accumulated national lagging behind, which it has become urgent to remedy, and against which the young people are rebelling at the same time that they are flocking massively to join the conservative forces of ISIS and Co.

Since the concept of the *umma*, the universal congregation of all Muslims, was introduced by the Prophet of Islam, the idea of Muslim unity, ruled from one center, has been prevailing as an ideal if not as a reality, for while this notion was readily feasible in the limited confines of the *polis* of Medina in Muhammed’s lifetime, it became increasingly difficult, and then outright impossible, to apply in the vast Muslim empire, as its conquests kept expanding. Indeed, far-flung provinces, like Andalusia in the west and Central Asia in the east, that were ruled by independent-minded governors soon found it more manageable and more lucrative to establish their own sultanates, with or without some vague submission to the suzerainty of the remote caliph. Various attempts were made in the modern era to establish pan-Muslim organizations, like the Muslim League or the Muslim Congress, after the demise of the caliphate in 1922, in order to rehabilitate Islamic unity, but none came to full fruition until the arson of the Aqsa mosque in 1968 which gave rise to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (later Cooperation), which has come to encompass all the fifty-seven Muslim-majority countries of the world.

However, even when there was no caliphate, the tradition of authoritarian rule had already been well rooted in Arab and Muslim lore, which facilitated its revival when it was resorted to. From its inception, Islamic government had to learn from the great imperial experiments of its

time: the Sassanids in Persia and the Byzantines in Anatolia, which combined empire and religion. The Prophet Muhammed, consciously or not, adopted this model in his ten years of rule in Medina (AD 622–32), for without his experience as a preacher in Mecca he would not have been invited to Medina, and without his ruling experience in Medina, it is doubtful whether his prophetic experience in Mecca would have served any practical purpose and accorded him his fame as the founder of Islam. The mold of government developed by Muhammed through his Medina experience while he was setting the first example of rule in the first Muslim *polis* consisted of five functions: prophecy and the legislative powers connected to it, spiritual leadership, executive power, judiciary, and the military.

It is also reasonable to assume that while establishing the fundaments of Muslim rule according to his needs, he also learned something from the imperial models he knew or learned about. Being possessors of an acute sense of obedience to his example, the Arabs as well as other Muslims have always felt that the great precedents set by him in his lifetime had necessarily grown to become valid for all times, especially after Muhammed died, and the Arabs sprang out of Arabia to conquer the world and were in need to find a Muslim style of government that would respond to their growing and pressing needs. One has to assume that they were convinced of divine assistance to their vast and exciting enterprise of conquest, which was done under their authoritarian regime of the time; therefore after the death of the Prophet they pursued the same route, which was common to them and to the enemies they fought against. Moreover, at a time when their Sassanid and Byzantine rivals were tyrannical rulers dipped in luxury and opulence, in addition to authoritarianism, to the point that one spoke of the legendary “Byzantine Court” and “Sassanid ostentation,” the Muslim court was managed much more simply and modestly, at least in the beginning of Islam, for the authority of the ruler was institutionalized in the *bay’ah* (oath of fealty), without a need to resort to all the paraphernalia which inspired awe, splendor, and authority in the rule and succession of those ancient imperial houses. That meant the Muslim ruler in place, who had been designated by the *Shura,* as in the times of the Rightful Caliphs, or later inherited his mantle through dynastic inheritance, was recognized and accepted in the public square, as if the oath of allegiance to him were given personally by each Muslim, for any time of rebellion or dissatisfaction with

the ruler, dubbedfit«a, meant that the oath *(bay'ah)* lost its validity. Then, worshippers no longer mentioned the name of the ruler at Fridays' prayers, as if the weekly validation of the oath no longer held. Thus, the outside symbols of power were very much personal and direct and needed no elaboration or ostentation.

The charisma of the Prophet in his time was beyond doubt or question. Nobody challenged his sublime qualities and natural propensity to rule, as if he were a prince who inherited those qualities. But what about those who followed him as rulers? Did they inherit his charisma? How was the balance preserved between their nature as pious and righteous men and their ability to govern the people, for the people, and make their rule appear as just and beyond reproach as possible? Allah's Messenger, apart from serving in all the functions cited above, also created and enforced a systematic ritual, repeated daily and many times a day, which became one of the sources of his power and made him also the spiritual and religious leader of the Muslim community, in addition to being the Messenger of Allah and His last Prophet. The first pillar of the faith, the *Shahada* (bearing witness), repeated at the head of each prayer the formula that "there was no God but Allah and Muhammed His Prophet." When it became the first of the articles of the faith, this formula made inextricable the connection between Him and the very belief in the religion. When repeated many times over, every day, in prayer, and preceding each important act one does, this accorded a central place to the Prophet in one's life. As long as the Prophet lived, and his contemporaries felt privileged to be around him, they could see in front of them the perpetual expression of Allah's grace, in sending to them the Seal of the Prophets and the most perfect of men to serve them and to guide them. There was never a possibility that anyone could question that charisma. Even in moments of friction with his closest companions, like with Umar in Hudaibiya, Muhammed's unique and prevalent quality remained, because he always had the last word.

When the Prophet suddenly died in AD 632, there was an urgent need to appoint a successor, lest his entire heritage disintegrate. The *Shura* elected Abu Bakr, probably by order or seniority since he was the oldest, but also the Prophet's father-in-law. What to make of his attribute of *Siddiq* (the Righteous)? Probably not much, because it was accorded to him after his death. After him came the three others (Umar, Uthman, Ali), every time following huge controversies and forceful lobbying for each candidate,

which ended with compromises, horse-trading, bargaining, threats, and pressures. The main issue was to designate a successor, lest the charisma of the Prophet be discontinued, and the authority of the caliph be so diminished that there would not be much left to inherit. At the same time it was clear that prophecy was sealed for ever by Muhammed, and so were the divine legislative powers that emanated from it. Therefore, all that could be passed on to the caliphs were the remaining functions of the Muslim ruler: civil legislation, executive, judiciary, spiritual, and military command. This combination of so many top functions made sure that the caliph would be no less omnipotent than the Prophet in the practical domain of rule, while the special and unique level of prophecy would remain sealed and out of bounds, hence the attribute of *Khalifa* (caliph) imputed to him, meaning a human figure, as even the Prophet had insisted upon characterizing himself, who served as a replacement, or vicar in Christian parlance for the replacement of Jesus on earth. But there the vicars became infallible popes to a divine figure, while the caliphs remained human all the way, with righteous qualities to be sure, but nothing divine, otherwise the doctrine of the unity of Allah *(tawhid)* would be seriously compromised.

After the Four Righteous, many Islamic dynasties followed, often simultaneously, and struggling against each other, and sometimes the sons of the same ruler fighting for the succession of their father, like the bloody struggles between Aurangzeb and his brothers for the succession of Shah Jahan who, in imprisonment, was helplessly watching his sons butchering each other. This war to the finish proceeded with every generation, for a new king could not feel safe on his throne, as an absolute ruler, unless all his rival contenders were eliminated. In the Arab monarchies today, there are families on the throne which try to ensure an orderly succession, and there is no telling when some outsider down the line might rebel and reverse the order, as had happened with the Nasser and Qaddafi antimonarchical revolutions in North Africa. There are certainly various degrees of absolutism, like the one perceivable in Saudi Arabia, without any institutions to palliate the royal house, and where even the *Shura* is appointed by the monarch, and in Kuwait and Jordan which have some kind of parliament. Some kingdoms, like Jordan and Morocco, boast their “constitutional monarchy,” but either they do understand the difference between their kingdoms and those of Benelux, the Scandinavians, and England, and they continue nonetheless their fraudulent pursuit, or they

don’t and they just play with words. But absolutism in these countries is not confined to monarchies, for in Saddam’s Iraq, Assad’s Syria, and Qaddafi’s Libya there was also an extreme sort of absolutism, which even surpassed monarchies in cruelty and egotism of the rulers. Some of them were/are so full of themselves that they designated heirs among their sons to succeed them (Saddam for Iraq, Mubarak for Egypt, Ali for Yemen, Qaddafi for Libya, Assad for Syria, where Bashar had actually inherited from his father in 2000).

There is almost no Muslim fundamentalist movement in the Islamic world today which, in spite of the uncertainties occasioned by the Spring, does not put forward its dream of establishing a *Shari’a* state as part of the ultimate caliphate. What is the magic of this utopian state that is so much talked about? We have already explained above the contribution of the caliphate to the authoritarian state in Islam, and we have to become aware that a caliphate would mean two contradictory trends: on the one hand, this is the ideal Islamic state that any Islamic society, in fact all Islamic societies, should strive for; but, on the other hand, this regime is only a replacement *(Khilafa)* to the truly ideal one that was at the time of the Prophet. The time of the Prophet was unique in human history and will not repeat itself, therefore the ideal will never come true again, after the era of the Prophet has revolved and the past has passed. But at the same time, the peak of human ambition cannot possibly surpass the original human endeavor as expressed in and by the caliphate. Thus, it is agreed that the caliphate is the most adequate regime to govern the *umma*, provide for its needs, and defend it. In the post-prophetic world, when the caliphate succeeded Muhammed’s rule, it was designed to become a universal Muslim administration, like the contemporaneous Sassanid and Byzantine Empires of the time which were regarded as governing all Zoroastrians and all Christians, respectively, as both empires and religions.

The great questions remain. Since no one could possibly emulate the Prophet or replace him, in spite of his unmistakably human nature, does one focus on the example of the caliphs only, and spot among them those particularly worthy of admiration and imitation? Second, will the agreed-upon model remain applicable to all generations to come of Muslims, in view that the *Shari’a* is itself eternal and immutable? And third, are there other ways than the *bay’ah* to legitimize the rule of the caliph, which creates a lasting social pact between the ruler and the ruled? At the

beginning of Islam, the Four Righteous Caliphs who succeeded *ad hoc* to the Prophet (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali), were elected by the *Shura* based on their personal merit, though admittedly nepotism, lobbying, tensions, competition, and quarrels were part and parcel of the process. But, exactly as the Prophet was the most perfect of the created men, and he could not sin or act indecently, so were the Righteous, known as second in sanctity only to the Prophet, who had come closest to perfection, though differences existed between and about them in Islam during their lifetime and certainly after their death. The fact is that three of the four were assassinated/killed in the middle of their term, creating a precedent of responding to disagreement by taking the lives of those who were thought to deviate from the crystallizing norm of government in post-prophetic Islam. The last of them, Ali, absorbed most cascades of criticism, because unlike others who accepted the choice of the *Shura* and served under the elected caliphs, he and his followers bitterly protested his "discrimination," since on three occasions he was skipped over and disregarded, until he was elected as the fourth successor.

Even when Ali was picked as the fourth successor to the dead Prophet, his election remained questioned and challenged by others, so much so that his brief caliphate of five years (656–61) was in itself controversial and ended with his death in battle, thus bringing to its close the *Rashidun* era of 30 years (632–61). Ali was supported throughout his repeated candidacy by a faction *(Shi'a)* of well-wishers and disciples, who brought out his personal and family qualities *(Ahl al-bayt)*, rather than his governmental skills, to fill the function of caliph, for he was the Prophet's cousin and also son-in-law, since he married Muhammed's sole surviving daughter Fatima. The Shi'a also propagated an unconfirmed claim that, on his deathbed, the Prophet had designated Ali, his son-in-law, as his successor. It would have immediately had a tremendous impact on the inheritance of government in Islam, had the Prophet had a son who would have perhaps succeeded him, which would have meant more of a reliance on blood succession than on merit. This complication was further aggravated when Mu'awiya, the nephew of the slain third caliph Uthman, accused Ali's people of the murder, seized power in Damascus, ostensibly to avenge his uncle, but in fact vied for himself and for the establishment of the Umayyads, the first dynastic house in Islam. Thus, it was not only Ali's life which ended in battle, but with him also the era of the Righteous Caliphs, who remain

nevertheless sublime and deeply hallowed in Islam, second only to the Prophet himself.

As explained above, the Ali faction was created and has maintained their patron's claim to the caliphate, that is, it was a political expectation and demand to start with. It is well possible that, had Ali received what he wanted, and the enormous opposition to him had been neutralized, there would have been no major schism in Islam. However, as it happened, right after 'Uthman's murder in 656 and Ali's appointment to succeed, the mounting opposition to him led him on a collision course with the mainstream, for, a great innovation was there, when Ali and his people claimed that family qualifications overrode personal merit. But Mu'awiya, who led the battle against Ali, did exactly what his sworn enemy wanted: to lend family priority to the rules of succession, when he instituted his royal house of the Umayyads to ostensibly avenge 'Uthman's murder, and then for decades passed the rule from father to son, thus opening the road thereafter to blood succession in Islam, as in other royal dynasties in other cultures, lasting to the decline of the Ottomans in the twentieth century. Nonetheless, Ali was accepted and venerated in Sunni Islam as the fourth caliph, while the Shi'ites continued to curse the first three as "usurpers." The Sunnites, who made many efforts for the Shi'a to join Islam as a fifth school, naturally predicated the union on the Shi'ites' acceptance of the first three Rashidun, but the followers of Ali categorically refused. Along the years, the two parts of Islam have grown so far apart, both politically and theologically, that it is impossible to see how they can get closer or how their principles can be bridged over. The Islamic Spring of the 2010s has further deepened and dramatized the gap between them, to the point of turning them into bitter rivals on both sides of the divide.

The main part of the Shi'a, the Twelvers who rule Iran, was founded on the principle of the Twelve Imams, the first of whom was Ali himself and then his two sons, Hasan and Hussein, and another series of nine imams, the last of whom had disappeared as a child in the tenth century, and as the Hidden Imam who rules the world from behind the scenes, He will reappear as the savior at the end of time, rescue humanity from misery, and inaugurate an era of justice and plenty. As long as this doctrine existed as an eschatological vision, it was not disputed so openly and bitterly, and the Shi'ite minority could live side by side with the Sunni majority in low profile, though no love was lost between them. But the Islamic Revolution

of Khomeini of 1979 having shuffled the cards, it in fact unwittingly served as the precursor of the Islamic Spring of the 2010s. Khomeini in his time and even more so Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran in the 2000s, have pressed for the acceleration of the messianic process. Like Rabbi Kook in religious Judaism, and unlike Ultra-Orthodox Jews who prefer the quietist approach of waiting and expecting the Messiah, some Iranian leaders have elected to aid the process and precipitate it by acts of piety, like the declaration of the revolution, the aid they extend to Syria, Hamas, and Hizbullah to fight for the cause of Islam, the convening in Tehran of the Terrorism International organization to struggle against the West and Israel, in order to hasten salvation.

Khomeini professed that his Islamic Revolution was intended for export. He also revived and operationalized the doctrine advocated by the senior Ayatollahs *(Ayatollah Uzma),* who are in constant contact with the Hidden Imam and get their guidance from Him; therefore they are the best positioned to know how to manage the affairs of the state until his reappearance and how to hasten his return. President Ahmadinejad, who despite his high position was not a cleric, was nevertheless one of the most zealous believers in hastening the coming of the Imam. When he was the mayor of Tehran he undertook the widening of the main avenues of the city to accommodate the large crowds which would be flooding the streets when the Imam reappears. When he spoke at the UN, he said he sensed and was aware of the aura of the Imam which enveloped him, all to mean that the return of the Hidden Imam was no longer an apocalyptic event to occur at the end of days, but a very concrete and imminent affair to be expected any day. Thus, when these visions and delusions were spelled out, coupled with the nuclear power that Iran has been frantically deploying a supreme effort to accomplish, they cause extreme concern in Israel and the world. Moreover, due to the historical division in the world of Islam between Sunni and Shi’a, Iran’s current doctrinal precipitation of what was traditionally an eschatological long haul thought, coupled with its stepped-up military preparations, nuclear and missile armaments, and its unbridled bellicose statements, has raised deep security concerns among Iran’s Sunnite neighbors and heightened the arms race in the region.

Another aspect is also added to these worries: unlike policy considerations of give and take, gains and losses, the desirable and the possible, which are usually weighed within rational boundaries, the

apocalyptic motive of Iran's leaders may distort their capacity to ponder pros and cons. For, they are persuaded that the worse the situation, the closer the Day of Judgment and the return of the Imam, which are foretold and signaled by what other faiths dub the "Pangs of the Messiah." In such a situation, they will not be deterred by threats and risks that they incur in pursuing their policy, but may even wish to precipitate them, knowing that they would thus hasten the return of the Imam. In other words, all the international reasonings, based on accepted norms of restraint, diplomatic custom, rational debate, and logical argument, are turned on their head. The Iranians, who had launched their Spring thirty years before all others, have in the meantime acquired some valuable allies in Iraq, Syria, Hizbullah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Gaza, thus forming the "Shi'ite Crescent" (despite the fact that Syria and the Hamas are consummately Sunnite), which has become a real threat to its neighborhood with its well-armed hundred million inhabitants who can sustain their own long-term bellicosity without risk of depletion or exhaustion. They are perceived as so dangerous to the Sunnite countries (except for Syria their ally, but that too can change if the eventual fall of Assad materializes) that for many clerics in the Sunnite world they are "worse than the Jews," no mean "compliment" for both. That means this is no longer a matter of bridging over the doctrinal gaps between them, but a widening gulf that can produce a confrontation between the parties and push the Sunnites to developing nuclear weapons too. Turkey enjoys a special status in this regard, because as a senior Sunnite state which wishes to lead the rest, it also abhors the idea of a nuclear Iran. One has to recall that the removal of the Erbakan government from Ankara in 1998 was due to its *rapprochement* to Iran, and that Syria, which Turkey wished to co-opt into her alliance with Iran to form a new Middle Eastern front, has slipped into chaos and caused increased tension with Iran. In 2012, as the balance in the new Middle East seemed to turn toward the Muslim Brothers and their ilk for a while, and as the IS forces have been shifting world attention to Syria and Iraq's chaos, it is difficult to predict what new powers will emerge if and when the dust of the Arab Spring might finally settle.

Shi'a continued, after its schism from the Sunna, to inhabit the eastern mountainous regions of Islamdom, in Persia/Iran and Central Asia, with one exceptional foray into North Africa, the Fatimid Empire of the time of the Crusades, while most other Muslim territories were Sunni. Namely, when

we talk about Muslim empires, we mean Sunnite. For the Shi'ites, that means if three out of the four first Caliphs are rejected as usurpers, then the entire model of the caliphate as the ideal form of rule collapses. After those four, Mu'awiya's family literally took over by force the kingship of the Arab/Muslim world, establishing the first dynasty of the House of Umayya, thus not only enforcing dynastic hereditary succession of the rule instead of the previously meritocratic system, but also determining that since no dynasty can survive forever, there were going to be wars of succession in the years to come. After the Umayyads came the Abbasids, some of whose legendary rulers were immortalized in the *One Thousand and One Night* tales, and they were themselves demoted by the Mongols in 1258 when Baghdad was occupied and destroyed. But before it crumbled under the weight of its years, the dynasty had grown more Islamic than Arab and its capital moved eastward to the Iranian area. However, the vast uncontrollable territories of the dynasty and the huge distances between them could not prevent new centrifugal forces from rising in the periphery: the Iberian Umayyads, the North African successive dynasties (Almoravids and then Almohads), the Fatimids followed by the Mamluks in Egypt, and then slowly the penetration of the Turkish Seljuks and Ottomans, who once islamized, contributed to the revitalization of the Islamic empire.

The historical experience with so many caliphates, from the Righteous to the Ottomans, even if we should include the mighty Moghuls who paralleled the Ottomans chronologically, shows us that only seldom was the ideal of one *Shari'a* law caliphate inclusive of the entire *umma* close to being realized. The record also shows that the more *dar-al-Islam* expanded, the less was the caliphate able to exercise power over it. For example, when Islam reached East and Southeast Asia and black Africa, and took root in places like Indonesia, Malaysia, Mali, Kenya, and Nigeria, it was clear that aspiring to one all-encompassing Muslim caliphate had become impractical. Then, why the persistence of the single-mindedness of this kind of regime as the ideal one, while in the real world it could almost never enforce itself in view of the geographical, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and political diversity? Maybe the modern dreamers of the renewed caliphate hope that the improvements in communications and transport could make possible what was not in the previous centuries. In any case, this mythical ambition persists. Take, for example, the platform of the Hamas, worded in 1988, which was supposed to respond to the Palestinian aspiration to rid

themselves of what they saw as Israeli occupation, but ended up peddling the idea of the caliphate, which even larger and more secure states like Turkey and Pakistan, who had experienced empire, are not dreaming of. The reason is that the Hamas, being a branch of the Muslim Brothers, who have made the caliphate one of their main tenets, is bound to raise it as one of its principal goals. Now that Egypt itself, the homeland of the Brothers, has come under their aegis for a while (2012–13) before they were disinherited by force and then by popular vote (2013–14), it may be that this item will remain confined to the blueprints of radical Muslim movements such as the Taliban and ISIS.

Democracy is not only elections, because beyond a given method of electing the leadership, it also means a state of mind that lets the media act freely; respects the majority but protects the minority; does not pursue investigative journalists who publicize the corruption of the system, like the case in Pakistan and Turkey today; respects human rights; gives top adjudicating power to an independent judiciary; does not arbitrarily arrest its citizens, accusing them of "plots against the government"; refrains from incitement against its citizens and neighbors; advocates an open and liberal mode of government; and pursues a policy of good neighborliness with its neighbors. Where was there ever a paradise like this in the Islamic world? And where could such a regime materialize after so many years of oppression, corruption, and travesty of justice? For a regime to be able to operate on such a standard, it has first to be legitimate. It is obvious that the Spring broke out precisely in countries where the young people have had enough of tyrannical rule for decades, with no chance of change, for the rule of the fathers was to be taken up by their sons. Namely, the hopelessness of change was what pushed the young people to rebel. The demonstrators shouted: "Freedom!! Democracy!! Expel the Tyrant!!" But we do not know what they meant, nor did they indicate what ought to be done in order to alter the situation. In most places we saw the same hypocrites and servile aides of the previous rulers, who had served them obediently for years, suddenly turn over to the rebels. So people are suspicious and confused, not knowing whom to trust, convinced that whoever steals for you today will steal from you tomorrow.

At the height of the crisis, the only alternative to the crumbling rulers has seemed to be the Islamic state that the Muslim Brothers had consistently preached since their inception. They are on record as opposing democracy,

for being a human-made system that cannot compete with divinely inspired *Shari'ah.* Thus, the latter, despite its problems and anachronism, and the caliphate after a millennium and a half of experiments which never lasted indefinitely, still looks to the believers as the most trusted, known, and promising avenue. In other words, that was the only system that could still lend legitimacy to the rulers, being based on Islamic tradition. For that reason, each time an existing system threatened to crumble, the caliphate alternative loomed in the horizon as the only acceptable alternative. But when we begin comparing it with democracy, we immediately realize that not only are they incompatible, but they contradict each other in some very fundamental respects. Some believe that fundamentalist movements which negate democracy totally would have stepped immediately into a *Shari'ah* caliphate-like state, as did the Taliban during their short stint in power (1996–2001) in Afghanistan and as the Islamic State is trying to do in Iraq and Syria. But the masses in the world of Islam have become so open to world media, to television, to the customs and standards of living in the West, to Internet and the social networks, and to the benefits of liberal democracy and human rights that they cannot be easily deprived from all that after decades of exposure. They are no longer prepared to accept oppression as a divine calamity; therefore the idea of a caliphate, which would be another kind of oppression from their point of view, would not be readily accepted without question.

Therefore, relatively pragmatic Islamic movements, like those in Tunisia and those which ruled Egypt in 2012–13, were compelled to pretend to behave democratically, till the time the public became accustomed to their style of rule, before they begin imposing restrictions and gradually trapping their public into the incontrovertibility of *Shari'a* law, which no individual in an Islamic society can resist without incurring the wrath of his environment. This method has already been dubbed: "one man, one vote, one time," meaning that following the one voluntary vote which has lent legitimacy to their rule, such fundamentalists would need no more foreign legitimacy to rule, because they would be applying *Shari'ah.* For this reason, the early experiments we have witnessed in Egypt and Tunisia, as the test cases of the Islamic Spring, were decisive for the fate of the entire Spring. For if these tests had succeeded in operating a modern and efficient Muslim society, which enjoyed freedom, without the harassments that accompany puritanical Muslim societies, like restrictions on women and

public morals police, but with fair elections to all levels of government and the like, then a newly reformed style of the moderate Muslim Brothers, which could have been more pragmatic and sensitive than what they have been preaching for almost a century since their foundation, could perhaps have produced a fresh, softer, and feasible Islam, a sort of revolutionary reform, instead of the restorative reform that they have advocated since their beginnings.

Since all the ills, failures, and drawbacks of Islamdom are imputed to the corruption of Islamic society, due to both internal shortcomings and external "westoxication," it is imperative to revert to the times when Islam was at its height, Muslims were pious and jihad-propelled, and the caliphate was just, glorious, and feared by Europe. On the domestic front, it is essential to revive aggressive jihad, which has been neglected in recent generations, and reinstall Shari'a law, the Law of Allah, which alone guarantees the strength of Muslim society and is sure to produce devoted jihad fighters who will return Islam to its past glory. It is also necessary to turn the present Muslim society, which has been infected with foreign ideas, back into Islam by enforcing Shari'a law, as the Taliban had done in Afghanistan until crushed by America, and if it is impossible under the present tyrants to achieve that goal, then the radicals ought to follow the example of the Prophet, who had migrated *(Hijra)* from the pagan society (*Jahiliyya)* of his native Mecca to Medina in AD 622, in order to launch his jihad for the conquest of Arabia and the world. So, if they cannot find a base for their struggle as Bin Laden had done in Sudan and then Afghanistan, then it is necessary to create a base *(Qa'ida)* by carving swaths of territory in Islamic land, as the ISIS and the jihadi fighters are doing in Syria, where they can start to enforce the Law of Allah.

However, as these experiments did not succeed, and one is entitled to suspect whether the eternal values of Islam will prevail, with their conservative and fundamentalist leanings, as in the days of Ibn Taymiya in Egypt and Syria or the Wahhabis in Arabia, or the days of Banna and Qutb in Egypt, and the clerics once again regard themselves as the watchdogs of the integrity of their faith in the face of the Western cultural and civilizational onslaught, then major confrontations are to be expected between the two styles of life, where not necessarily the stronger, but the more doggedly committed to his version of Islam in the world wins, as has already been evident in many arenas of the Spring today, especially in Syria

and Iraq. The days of the Islamic Spring have shown that even in Islamic societies which had taken large strides toward civil government, like Turkey and Tunisia, it was still possible to arrest the process with the help of the backward societies of the conservative and illiterate countryside in both places, while the urban bourgeoisie was watching with horror, but helplessly, its great modernizing achievements rolled back toward their abrogation. What model of Islam will these countries choose when the dust settles? Only time will tell.

Failing to bring together under one roof most of the Muslim states, to make up for the hopeless divisions in Islamdom since the fall of the last caliphate in 1922, many ideas were offered over the years to create a pan-Islamic international organization that would collectively replace the bygone Ottoman sultanate. It was clear that while the idea was attractive to nearly every Muslim, for it was likely to revive the corporate sense of power of the Muslim community, with its fifty-seven Muslim nations spanning two continents and 1.5 billion believers, not counting the millions of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries, personal, local, and regional jealousies would scuttle that endeavor: Egypt was sure to claim the role of leadership due to the location of al-Azhar in its capital; Pakistan was certain to counterclaim that it was larger, more populated, and stronger militarily, especially since it possessed the first “Islamic bomb”; Indonesia could lay the claim to leadership by virtue of being the largest and most populous Muslim nation; and the Saudis could with equal validity advance the fact that it served as the curator of the two holiest places of the Islamic faith, Mecca and Medina. This competition, sometimes latent and at other times bitterly in the open, indeed prevented the establishment of such an organization during the 1930s through the 1960s, until the arson of the Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem by a lunatic Australian in August 1969, of which Israel was predictably accused, and the ensuing Rabat Conference convened by Morocco’s King to discuss the “rescue of Jerusalem.” It was there that the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (later Cooperation, the OIC) was born.

The organization, which at first was established with only part of the Muslim states participating, grew by leaps and bounds until it came to embrace all fifty-seven Muslim states, permanently represented by their foreign ministers and meeting once every year in one Muslim capital or another, from Rabat to Kuala Lumpur and from Lahore to Benghazi.

Occasionally, as the situation requires, summit conferences are held where heads of states, monarchs, presidents, and dictators of all sorts participate. Several high points have to be noted, like 1976 when Turkey, the avowedly civil government, joined the conference and even hosted it in Istanbul; and the ten-year term of Turkish Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu who altered the name of the organization from Conference to Cooperation, injecting an element of Islamic activism during the reign of Tayyip Erdogan as prime minister in Ankara and turning that otherwise indolent organization into a potent and hyperactive body which initiated policies and adopted high visibility internationally. There is evidence to show that the high exposure of the organization, its secretariat and general secretary, and the televised summit conferences of all members, where ideological commitment and pecuniary arm-twisting play a part, have projected on its meetings a sense of omnipotent corporate caliphate where matters of world importance are discussed and settled. The Muslim populace which watches on television those august encounters has reason to find solace in their aggregate might, from the otherwise miserable existence that they endure daily. Indeed, the organization states that it is “the collective voice of the Muslim world” and works to “safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony.” The OIC has a permanent delegation to the United Nations and uses as official languages in its deliberations Arabic, English, and French.

Viewing its major role as safeguarding the interests of its members, the organization often clashes with other UN members who regard various issues differently, for example, matters of defining terrorism, which have stymied efforts at the UN to produce a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. During a meeting in Malaysia in April 2002, delegates of OIC discussed terrorism but failed to reach a definition of it. They rejected, however, any description of the Palestinian fight with Israel as terrorism. Their declaration was explicit: “We reject any attempt to link terrorism to the struggle of the Palestinian people in the exercise of their inalienable right to establish their independent state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.” In fact, at the outset of the meeting, the OIC countries signed a statement praising the Palestinians and their “blessed intifada.” The word terrorism was restricted to describe Israel, whom they condemned for “state terrorism” in their war with the Palestinian people, while any horrific act of murder against Israeli civilians in buses, restaurants, or synagogues is

considered a legitimate part of the just Palestinian struggle. Conversely, at the thirty-fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), an OIC section in May 2007, the foreign ministers termed Islamophobia the worst form of terrorism.

When one examines in detail the OIC conferences of Jeddah (2006), Dakar and Kampala (2008), which were analyzed by Bat Ye'or,[2] one realizes not only how the African margins of OIC have entered the core of the organization, but especially the extent to which the reformed OIC of the 2000s has penetrated world affairs and impacted them. In the Jeddah Conference of 2006 the agenda included the publication in Denmark and elsewhere of cartoons that Muslims considered as defamatory,[3] the perennial Palestinian problem, and the situation in Iraq in the midst of the American intervention there. The conference deplored that the EU Council had only recognized that "freedoms come with responsibilities" and that "freedom of expression should be exercised in a spirit of respect for beliefs and other convictions. Mutual tolerance and respect are universal values we should all uphold." The OIC minister regretted that the EU Council had not planned collective measures to prevent the recurrence of such acts of defamation in the future. Thereupon, the ministerial committee in Jeddah decided that the OIC states should pursue efforts to achieve the following objectives:

1. Adoption of a resolution at the UN General Assembly to proscribe defamation of religions and religious symbols, blasphemy, denigration of all Prophets, and the prevention in the future of other defamatory actions;
2. Planning a global strategy to prevent the defamation of religions with the implementation of effective and appropriate measures; and
3. Intensification of contacts with the international community, particularly Europe, the EU-OIC Joint Forum, and the Alliance of Civilizations, to encourage the Dialogue of Civilizations.

On the subject of Palestine, the OIC commended the "democratic elections" in Gaza and carried Hamas to power. In its distorted view of democracy, which does not exist almost in any member of the organization, and whose term has long expired in 2010 and never renewed, the OIC used defamatory language against Israel, the only model of democracy in the area, and

falsely accused Israel of attacking sacred Christian and Muslim places, pretending to care for Muslims who have been persecuted in the Islamic world in order to gain credibility in Christendom. In March 2008 the OIC summit met again in Dakar and confirmed its adherence to the ten-year program adopted in Mecca in 2005, urging Islam unity. In that conference the participants urged to retrieve from Israel and substitute the Islamic name of "al-Quds" to the ancient biblical name of Jerusalem so as to erase any traces of the three thousand-year Jewish history in the city. The OIC also proclaimed that from that region of the world came the spiritual message "that advocates love for one's fellow human beings and confirms that Islam as a religion of peace forbids exclusivity and extremism." Never mind that it was conquering and expanding Islam which wiped out Christianity and Judaism in the Holy Land and erased the Christian faith from Byzantine, which with the conversion of the largest church in Constantinople into a mosque also rebaptized the city into Istanbul and the Byzantine Empire into the Ottoman one. Of course, all that was done in "a spirit of love for one's fellow human beings." Lending to the OIC the role of the legitimate corporate representative of all Muslims, Secretary Ihsanoglu, following the example of his hatred-filled prime minister, accused Israel of blocking the peace process and simply overlooked, or simply did not read, the Hamas Charter which vowed to destroy the Jews and their state, and tried on three occasions (2008, 2012, and 2014) to bury the civilian population of Israel under a rain of bombs, missiles, and other projectiles.

In June the OIC met again in Kampala, Uganda, not exactly as a Muslim state since only 12 percent of its population follows that faith, but the OIC has been monetarily attractive enough to enlist into its non-Muslim states, which could also justify Israel joining that organization, since close to 18 percent of its inhabitants are Muslims. In an attempt to alter history, the organization called upon the Secretariat to convene seminars and conferences with international and regional organizations on the "historic Islamic boundaries of al-Quds and on the means of foiling the attempts by the Israeli occupation to modify them." The members also invited the Vatican, Eastern churches, and other Christian congregation to "participate in the struggle against Judaization" and called for recognition of Muslim rights in Cyprus, Kashmir, and Armenia. The member-states also noted the "Indian attempt to malign the legitimate Kashmiri freedom struggle by denigrating it as terrorism" and called upon India to "cease its massive

violations on human rights in Kashmir and Jammu," as if there were even one Islamic state that came close to the democracy and human rights prevailing in India. In the following Intercultural Education and Dialogue that was held in Copenhagen in October 2008 between Europeans and Muslims, Ihsanoglu emphasized that he was not there to promote dialogue and understanding on a parity basis, but that "participation in the conference responded to the wishes of the member states desirous of curbing the growing current of prejudice, disinformation, stereotypes, discrimination and intolerance aimed at the Muslims and their religion." In other words, Muslims were irreproachable with their bombings, murders, kidnappings, and hijackings against Christians and Jews, and only the latter had to mend their ways.

Notes

"ISIS Militants Seize Wheat from Iraqi Government Grains silos," *Al Arabiya* News, November 17, 2014.

Bat Ye'or, *Europe, Globalization and the Coming Universal Caliphate* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), 47ff.

For the entire story see R. Israeli, *The Spread of Islamikaze Terrorism in Europe* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), especially Chapter 5, "The Cartoon Affair and the Failure of Dialogue and Coexistence," 277-362.

5

Muslim Radicals in the West

Judging from the continuous stream of homegrown European Muslim youth to swell the ranks of the Jihadi movements like al-Qa'ida, IS, *Jabhat al-Nusra*, and others, one would think that the Muslim immigrant population of Europe, which has been established there for the third generation now since the 1950s, has become part and parcel of the Islamic upheaval in the Middle East that has been threatening both the West and the Arab conservative regimes to such an extent as to occasion their clustering together to fight Islamic terrorism. In addition to the dichotomy in which they had lived in their countries of origin between universal Islam and local nationalism, Muslim minorities in the West are caught in another contradiction between the House of Islam where believers are urged to dwell and the Abode of War where they live in practice. In the West, where they already constitute sizeable populations (thirty million in Europe, not including Russia, and a few millions in the Americas), they already experience an emotional hardship to identify as French or Swedish, for lack of cultural and religious roots in their chosen countries of residence. Hence, apart from those Muslim immigrants who have nearly totally integrated, or were born in place (for the third generation now), many others still live divided in their hearts as to their identities, to the point that we see some of them, or their descendants, mounting acts of terrorism against their host countries (e.g., London 2005, Paris 2015, Spain 2004). A striking example became *cause celebre* when some young Frenchmen of Algerian origin, "homegrown" as the British like to dub their Pakistani-originating Muslim youth, refused to sing the *Marseillaise* with the rest of their compatriots, and even booed those who sang, during an international soccer game between their new adoptive country and their original one. In some cases, notably in the "big three"—France, Britain, and Germany—which have absorbed more than three million Muslims each, signs are evident of many separate Muslim educational systems which encourage separation and dissidence rather than integration and assimilation in their chosen countries

of shelter.[1] At any rate, the consistent flow of European Muslim volunteers to areas of Jihadi Islamic fighting, first in Afghanistan, then in Iraq, and now in Syria and Iraq, is evidence enough of the strong spiritual, emotional, and religious ties of young Muslims in their Western diasporas to the core areas of Islam and to their original culture and faith. Moreover, this growing appeal of the Muslim areas of conflict to a wave of Western converts into Islam tends to show that many facets of the contemporary Muslim identity, as of old, are crystallizing around Jihad and the aura of romance, excitement, adventure, and fulfillment of religious duty that surrounds it.

This volume is in some ways a sequel to this author's *Islamikaze*[2] where this very term was first coined, and the ideological and organizational setting was laid out for the September 11 (2001) events and their aftermath. Since then, mainly due to the extraordinary security measures adopted in the United States, which were much maligned by the Europeans and by Muslims whose acts of terror had caused the tightening of security in the first place, not one more significant terrorist event has occurred on its soil, at least for now. Conversely, European allies of the United States, including some of those who had reneged on their alliance and elected to cut deals with the terrorists, and even more so Asian countries, many of them among the fifty-seven Islamic Cooperation member-states, who thought they were immune to such horrors, have become the immediate and repeated victims thereof. But this volume is not dealing in detail with the already well-established and deeply entrenched Islam in the big three of Europe (Britain, France, and Germany) where its demographic impact amounting to millions (three, six, and three, respectively) has irretrievably altered the social and political make-up of those countries. Only Islam in Europe, as it concerns its participation in the global radical Muslim movements, will be of interest to us here. Islam had penetrated Europe and the West since the Middle Ages, first during the invasion by the Arabs in the seventh century from the south, when they conquered Spain, Portugal, and half of France, before they were arrested by the Charles Martel victory in 732 near Poitiers. This was followed by eight centuries of Muslim rule in Andalusia that ended with their final withdrawal from Granada in 1492, under the relentless advance of the Spanish *reconquista*. The second invasion was launched by the Ottomans from the southeast, which led to the fall of Constantinople into their hands and went as far as the gates of Vienna before it was arrested and thwarted in 1683, and ultimately led to the break-up of the Ottoman Empire

during World War I. The current third penetration is done by immigration and the demographic inundation of Europe, together with a campaign of *da'wa* to propagate Islam, aided by a terrorist wave to intimidate the West.

International terrorism has not been limited to the confines of the Islamist struggle against the West in the international arena, but has expanded into the domestic scene of Islamic countries where local Islamist oppositions aspire to seize power from current considered-illegitimate rulers who are usually supported by the West. This is the genesis of the Bali, Casablanca, Istanbul, Sinai, Amman, Riyadh, and Jeddah acts of terror that were primarily directed against visiting aliens after September 11, in order to destroy the tourist source of income or the economic base of those hated regimes. More ominously, many a homegrown Islamic radical, who was allowed to sow lethal propaganda in Western democracies where he had initially sought asylum from oppression in his land of origin, has used his familiarity with his adoptive country to turn it into his target of terror. This is the background for September 11 and then the Madrid (March 2004) and London (July 2005) horrors.

For too long had the world accepted as a "natural" calamity the Palestinian hijackings of the 1970s and 1980s which had inaugurated this era of international terrorism. Instead of fighting against them and uprooting them, Western governments and passengers accepted with staggering docility to be stripped at airports and searched, to have their otherwise sacrosanct privacy encroached upon and trampled upon in public, to pay ever-increasing air-fares in order to cover security costs, and to repeat the mantra that a "solution of the Palestinian conflict will resolve the problem." America has reversed itself and resolved to fight only following the September 11 attacks on its soil, while Madrid has elected to yield to the terrorists' demands and change its government and also abandon the American alliance to fight against terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. London on its part "changed the rules" only after it was rocked by a series of attacks on its public transportation, and the rest of the Western countries slowly began to follow suit.

After the Van Gogh murder in the Netherlands in 2004 and then the anti-Denmark outburst of Muslim rage in the Cartoon Affair of early 2006, the public debate was turned on its head. Previously, far from recognizing that the fight against terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan, and worldwide was launched by the United States as a defensive measure, after it was attacked

on its home territory, America's detractors in Europe and the Muslim world claimed, on the contrary, that it was American offensive moves in those countries which prompted terrorism, exactly as it was Israel's "injustices" toward the Palestinians that had triggered terrorism in the first place. Cause and effect were reversed in a Kafkaesque fashion. So, instead of joining the United States in its universal struggle against terrorism, and thus also rid themselves of its menace, they blamed the violence on American and Israeli policies, thus unwittingly becoming its unwilling accomplices and its unsuspecting next victims. But the Cartoon Affair of early 2006 has dramatically demonstrated that the general Muslim wrath against the West and Israel had just been compressed for years due to the measures taken by Muslim governments who were afraid of American retribution. It is also likely that the wrath was compressed until Muslims were confident that their presence in the West constituted a critical mass, numerous enough to instill fear of potential civil disorder in the European governments. The fear from American retribution, which was brought to bear in Afghanistan and Iraq, may have been somewhat mitigated by America's proven constraint to absorb atrocious behavior from Syria, Iran, or Egypt, or the havoc of the 1973 oil price rise. In that regard one might say that the Arabs were constantly testing the limits of what America will tolerate, but they were also aware that America turns a blind eye to misdemeanors a plenty in order to secure uninterrupted oil flow from the Middle East. Thus America (and other Western countries for that matter) were seen to favor totalitarian rulers in the Middle East, fearful of the regimes that may replace them—the "devil they know" approach. No American president wished then to be responsible for creating another Iran, after the ignominious behavior of President Carter vis-à-vis the shah. It was not until the 2010s that America under Obama became energetically independent and felt free to act (as in the case of IS) without being paralyzed by threats of energy upheavals.

The waves of recriminations of the Muslim world against the West and Israel, have also been expressed in the rise of Muslim parties in Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority and in the unbridled desire of the Iranians to go nuclear, and in the thug-like rhetoric of its President Ahmadinejad against Western values and the Jews in general. This went as far as Iran denying the *Sho'ah* in blatant terms, as a Western invention to placate the Jews and Israel. The zeal in the Islamic world was then directed not only against Israel and the West, but aimed primarily to sweep out of

power their own Western-allied regimes in the Muslim countries, which were regarded as American stooges. As the major Egyptian paper, *al-Ahram,* put it, "religious identity has replaced nationalist ideology,"[3] and that applied not only to Muslim countries but also amid Muslim minorities throughout their diasporas. This meant that Muslim terrorism would continue to rise in both Europe and the Muslim world. One has to realize nevertheless the distortions of the basic data of Islam, by both scholars and politicians, who wished to depict a more benign and less menacing picture of the radical Islamic rise than it was in fact. This was done through two distinctions that have become conventional wisdom among both critics and proponents of Islam. One is the artificial bifurcation between the so-called "Islamists" or radicals, and the majority itself, which is supposedly "peace-loving', shunning violence and has no quarrel with West. The other artificial, and equally spurious, distinction wants us to believe that Judeophobia, which is an attenuated sort of anti-semitism posing as anti-Zionist and anti-Israel, has nothing to do with anti-semitism; and that while Islam as a whole carries no traces of anti-semitism, its present anti-Jewish manifestations are no more than a much less lethal and vastly less threatening Judeophobia. It is clear that these "scientific" distinctions, though pursued by some scholars of reputation, and may have some empirical merit to them, have much more to do with political correctness and with a degree of sheepish dhimmi-like submissiveness, or fear of being accused of racism, than with historical reality.

When one examines the spread of Islam into Europe, one must take stock of all those considerations, and come to the conclusion that it is not enough to account for Muslim immigration into the Old Continent and its transformation at their hands, but also go into the dialectic between European countermeasures after the major acts of terror that occurred there and the Muslim worldview which regards those European defensive measures as acts of aggression, persecution, racism, and discrimination against the ever-docile and always "poor," helpless, innocent, and "victimized" Muslims who had just come to seek work, not equipped with ill intentions to cause any damage. When Britain or Germany idolized multiculturalism as a way to "enrich" European culture and celebrated the fake "difference" between moderate Islam of the mainstream and the violent few, the Muslims regarded that, by and large, as an attempt to dilute Islam in order to dominate and eliminate it. For them, only their

unrestricted and violent activity against local Jews in Europe, and in favor of recognition of their own mores and norms, such as wearing the veil, forcing marriage on their women, or pursuing "honor killings," would be acceptable as a fair and acceptable behavior of the host countries toward them. In other words, not satisfied with full equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and of religious cult, Muslims demand special privileges for themselves, like the prerogative to train terrorists or incite violence against other fellow citizens, because in their skewed view of democratic society, only too much freedom and *laissez-faire*, even at the detriment of the host state and society, is enough freedom for them. When they burn down a Jewish synagogue in Berlin or Paris, they expect their adopted countries to accept that as a matter of course, and they are often aided in that belief by the local extreme-left or extreme-right, or church organizations that boost Muslim demands due to their common anti-semitism or in order to appear as "progressive" multiculturalists.

Europe had been stunned, like the rest of the world, by the horrors of September 11, and European delegations and leaders poured into Washington, DC, to present their condolences and sympathies to the United States. But as soon as the United States began to react to terrorism by fighting it actively, first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq, it would have found itself almost lonely on the scene if it were not for the devoted loyalty of Tony Blair, who harnessed the resources of his country to that battle. Moreover, many Europeans elected their bilateral deals with Saddam's Iraq over the eradication of its regime, and instead of instilling into their citizenry the need to stand up to the new barbarians, they behaved like the spoiled "soft" states who have lost the will to stand up for their values and future. One ought to remember that the rich and powerful empires of Rome, Persia, Byzantium, and China, who were dipped in their self-contentment, had much to lose because they had grown fat and lazy and were unwilling to fight anymore. They lost the battles to the Vandals, the Arabs, the Turks, and the Mongols (and then the Manchus), respectively, because the latter had nothing to lose, looked with contempt upon life, but coveted the wealth of their neighbors and concluded that it behoove them to inherit it, rather than abandon it in the hands of the declining and spoiled empires they attacked and destroyed.

In terms of the 2000s, the Muslim world, which consists of some fifty-seven Muslim-majority countries spanning the two continents of Asia and

Africa, comprises about 1.5 billion believers, making it after Christianity the second largest faith. Islam spread since its inception, as did other faiths, by conquest, by missionary work, or by expanding trade from the core areas of Islam in the Middle East to the Far East and the Coasts of Africa. While it was extending its rule into others' territories it necessarily came into armed conflict with the prevailing cultures, like the Zoroastrians of Iran, the Berbers in North Africa, the Christians of Europe, the Hindus of the Indian subcontinent, or the Jews and the many Christian denominations of the Middle East. But since the arrest of the Muslim Ottomans at the gates of Vienna by the Europeans in the late seventeenth century, and the defeat of the Muslim Moghuls in India by the British in the nineteenth century, a reversal in the fortunes of Islam has unfolded. Thenceforth, Islamic might would be in the descent and the European and Western power on the ascent. As Islamdom withdrew, independent Judeo-Christian and Hindu nations emerged in the Balkans, in India, and in the Levant, and the remaining Islamic world was colonized by Europe, until its reemergence as independent nation-states after the world wars. The gap that continues to yawn between the medieval glorious days of supreme Islam and its fate of submission and backwardness in the modern world is the stuff that continually ignites the eruptions of Muslim frustrations against the West which had caused its demise.

Colonization of Islamdom by the West had its long-term mixed effects nonetheless, inasmuch as modernization, both in thought and in effect, had set in and began gnawing at the monopoly of Islam in those societies. As a result, the elites of those emerging new nations had taken to Western culture and learned the languages, the mores, the civilizations, the institutions, and the thought of their occupiers and remained tied to them long after their emancipation from their rule. So, after attaining independence, many formerly colonized populations moved to the metropolis of their previous occupiers and established Muslim communities there. Some of the new comers were more at home in the ambience of their newly adopted cultures than in their original homes where they had become alienated. Others went in search of better economic opportunities, still others came for study periods or to seek political asylum, but then they were reluctant to relinquish the freedom, prosperity, and tranquility of the West and to return to the poverty, oppression, and turmoil of their own countries. Compared to the immense populations of their original homelands, these were tiny

trickles of privileged individuals or families who were intent on adapting to their new environments, to adopt their new countries and cultures as their own, and to take the necessary steps to merge into the host cultures of their choice. Their limited numbers on the one hand, and their dispersion among the alien general population on the other, was a built-in guarantee that in no time they would integrate into the mainstream and assimilate completely.

But the rapid economic growth of Europe in the aftermath of World War II, due to both the reconstruction of the ravages of the war and the economic and technological revolutions that those societies underwent, coupled with the very slow pace of reproduction of European populations, where both men and women were seeking careers rather than raising families, brought about an acute shortage of manpower. Previous colonies, where manpower was available which required relatively limited cultural adaptation, became the never-drying-up and limitless sources for unqualified laborers, who little by little at first, and then in droves, would lavishly replenish the slacking pool of workers in Europe. Needless to say that vast countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia, which had been founded as immigrant societies in the first place, would also absorb much of this massive immigration from Muslim countries to the West. This growing movement of populations now came to encompass not only adventurers and seekers of new economic opportunities, but also increasing numbers of “political refugees,” some of whom were genuine asylum seekers from the oppressions of their regimes at home, but many of them learned to abuse the generosity, concern for human rights, and openness of the West, to run away from “justice” in their own countries or to use their countries of asylum as launching pads for political struggle against their home regimes. Eventually, some of the latter would turn against their adoptive countries as well and launch terrorist campaigns against them.

These new immigrants, who for the most part gained local citizenship after the requisite period of residency which varies from one country to another, no sooner had their status raised from temporary immigrants to permanent residents or full-fledged citizens, than they began to list their impact on their adoptive countries in different areas:

1. Under the humanitarian heading of “family reunion,” they secured immigration rights for many of their relatives back home, thus markedly increasing their numbers; for many of the radical Muslims,

this has become a sort of “soft Jihad” to encourage Muslim immigration into their new adoptive countries in order to increase their influence through sheer numbers.

2. Due to their social and religious needs, they constructed Muslim communities in certain localities throughout Europe, where their numbers created local majorities that no running candidate for elections could ignore; the growth of the communities required the construction of mosques and Muslim cultural centers, part of which were and remain innocent houses of prayer, but others grew into secret lodges of subversion and undercover nests for incitement and recruitment of radical youth.
3. Muslim communities, side by side with many of their irreproachable cultural activities, soon also engaged in illicit avenues of civil disobedience and criminal activities, and sometimes in radical incitement against the state; as a result, prisons in Europe are saturated with Muslim inmates out of proportion to their rate in the general population.
4. Muslim communities have exported the Middle Eastern conflict into their host countries, with the attending acts of violence and an unbridled anti-semitic campaign against local Jewish communities which had otherwise lived peacefully for many centuries; many of the second and third generations of these Muslims (called *beur* in France), who were brought up in a Middle Eastern “environment” of conflict and war, find it easy and “natural” today to converge to the ISIS battlefield in Syria and Iraq.
5. Muslim individuals, and some of their leaders, make no secret of their intent to change Europe to their tune, not to adapt to it. They demand, and in some cases achieve, in the name of multiethnicism and multiculturalism, their own school systems, in their own native languages, financed by the host state, the Christians of Europe, and in the long run to its own detriment.
6. European countries have adopted multiculturalism, and increasingly multilingualism, not as the implementation of the chosen social ideal of cross-fertilizing different cultural groups by allowing them to enrich each other, but as an imposed reality whereby they have abdicated their role to absorb the new comers and integrate them into the existing

systems, and instead let the immigrants dictate their own visions of "integration," which means in effect separatism, secession, or an eventual takeover when demography had run its course.

The numbers of young Muslim volunteers from the West who flock to the Middle East as Jihadi fighters have to be tackled together with the problems of demography, because the inroads of the 1.5 billion Muslims into the Western societies of Europe, America, and Australia being quite a new phenomenon, and with their numbers increasing incessantly, either via immigration (legal or illegal) or by natural growth, their sheer rate in the general population and their awakening to their Muslim identity discourage their integration, and not only give rise to the problems they encounter in their Western experience, but also augment the rate of their flow toward the battlefields of Islam. There are already areas of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and also Germany and Britain, where Muslim children constitute the majority of the school population, a situation that is pregnant with disaffection and can potentially lead to unrest and terror. Those islamized areas are also the potential pools of volunteer manpower of Jihadists.

While the demographic trends in Europe seem irreversible, in view of the European population's reluctance to perpetuate itself, on the one hand, and its pressing needs for manpower to replace its aging and retiring segments of society, on the other, it seems that a reassessment of the immigration policies is in the offing, for example, with regard to asylum seekers who do not necessarily respond to the labor needs of the host countries. Europe began rethinking its "safe haven" status after Ayaan Hirsi Ali's departure from Dutch politics played off fears about "bogus" asylum seekers. In Vienna, for example, tourists on the Ringstrasse were showing a "strange" and unusual sight and exclaiming "Did you see that one girl—so young! And wearing a veil, they will form a separate culture." That sentiment is no longer isolated. Earlier in May 2006, Austria's Interior Minister Liese Prokop announced that 45 percent of Muslim immigrants were "unintegratable" and suggested that those people should "choose another country."

Indeed, in the Netherlands, one of Europe's most integrated Somali refugees and a critic of radical Islam, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, resigned her seat in Parliament in the wake of criticism that she faked details on her asylum

application to the Netherlands in 1992. And France's lower house of Parliament passed a strict new immigration law. This came in the wake of recent rumblings from the top echelons of governments across Europe suggesting that the continent is rethinking its once-vaunted status as a haven for refugees, as it becomes more suspicious that many immigrants are coming to exploit its social benefits and democratic principles. "The trend today in Europe is more and more to try to control the immigration flow," said Philippe De Bruycker, founder of the Odysseus Network, an academic consortium on immigration and asylum in Europe. "At the same time we still say we want to respect the right of asylum and the possibility of applying for asylum. But of course along the way we create obstacles for asylum seekers," he acknowledged a day after Ms. Prokop made her controversial statement on May 15, 2006. Ms. Hirsi Ali, who was elected to Parliament in The Hague in 2003, was informed by her own political party that her Dutch citizenship was in question. Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk, a former prison warden dubbed "Iron Rita," who has long promised a tough stance on immigration, said "the preliminary assumption must be that—in line with case law of the Dutch Supreme Court— [Hirsi Ali] is considered not to have obtained Dutch nationality." At issue were inconsistencies in Hirsi Ali's application for asylum in 1992—giving a false name and age, and saying she was fleeing from Somalia's civil war, not from a forced marriage. Though she had publicly admitted to the falsities in 2002, a TV documentary heightened public scrutiny of the controversial parliamentarian, who had been under 24-hour protection from death threats since the murder of Theo Van Gogh, the director of a film she wrote. Hirsi Ali's case, heatedly debated across Europe in the days since Ms. Verdonk's announcement, was seen as particularly ironic. But it also highlights the dramatic change in Europe since the turn of this century.[4]

In the years following the World War II, a chagrined United States and Europe vowed to follow the Geneva Conventions and create safe havens for refugees. Yet such lofty ideals were hard to uphold after massive influxes of workers in the 1960s and early 1970s were halted during an economic downturn. Those immigrant populations, often Muslims from North Africa and the Middle East, swollen with family reunification, often remained economically and socially distinct from the societies that they had adopted. The image of the immigrant began to change, and distinctions between those who came for work and those who came for safety began to blur.

Now, said Jean-Pierre Cassarino, a researcher at the European-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration in Florence, Italy, “asylum seekers are viewed as potential cheaters.” Today, in once-homogenous Europe, tensions between immigrants and native Europeans appear to be increasing. The perception that an ever-increasing number of newcomers—who neither speak the language of their adopted country nor accept its cultural mores—are changing the culture has increased support for ideas once only advanced by far-right political parties. “France, Austria, and the Netherlands [and we might add Germany], all have had very significant electoral success of the far-right parties,” said Michael Collyer, a research fellow in European migration policy at the University of Sussex. Collyer pointed to the success in France of a strict new immigration law proposed by Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, who was in the meantime elected as France’s president in May 2007. Mr. Sarkozy’s proposal would institutionalize “selective” immigration, giving an advantage to privileged immigrants of better economic and education status who are more “integratable.” It would also change the rights of family reunification for workers already in the country and speed up the expulsion of undocumented (another politically correct euphemism for illegal infiltrators, recently adopted by the Obama-led United States too with regard to its Mexican population influx) immigrants. That category of illegal immigrants is either discovered over time or its applications for asylum are rejected. The promised new reforms would also lengthen the amount of time it takes to apply for permanent residency status for married couples and toughen visa requirements in general. The most controversial issue became Sarkozy’s announced deportations for undocumented immigrant school children. “We speak of the need to fight immigration but we don’t have a clear position on whether we need immigrants,” says Mr. De Bruycker, noting the precipitous dip in population growth in European Union countries in the last half century. He added that a series of recent incidents have affected the image of immigrants in the European mind: the murder of a Jewish man, Ilan Halimi, in the outskirts of Paris in spring 2006, for example, by a band of (Muslim) immigrant youths (and the eruption of anti-semitism that happened since); or the murder of a Malian woman and a Flemish child in Antwerp in May 2006 by the son of a founder of Belgium’s most far-right party. “In Europe, we are still unable to accept that we are a continent of immigration,” said De Bruycker.[5]

The basic datum when one considers demographic growth in the Islamic world is that, beyond its expansion into new areas, such as Western democracies, it has sustained a consistent internal growth of 3 percent for many years, that is, a doubling of the total population every generation of twenty-five years. This means that with this breakneck pace of birthrate which stems from traditional norms and is supported by prohibitions on birth control, it is difficult to break these trends. Moreover, a general trend exists in the developing world, where the rich get richer and the poor more children, of a decreasing mortality due to health improvement. Thereupon, there seemed to be in previous decades a virtual population explosion in the Islamic world. Countries like Iran, Turkey, and Egypt, which boasted in the 1980s of populations of 35–40 million each, have doubled it since, not to speak of Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, where the Muslim populations that were already high in the 1980s, attaining 100 million in Indonesia and the 70-80 million mark for the rest, have also doubled since. Smaller-sized countries like Saudi Arabia, Syria, Morocco, and Algeria have also doubled their populations (from 10-15 to 20-30 million), as also the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza (from 1.6 to 3.2 million). This trend, which some demographers believe is about to reverse itself, will, if ever, take a long time to reflect on the European Muslim population. But for now, the three-quarter billion Muslim population of the 1980s has soared during this period to one billion and a half, that is, 30 percent of the world population of an estimated 7 billion. Moreover, since most of this population is young, the rapid demographic growth in those countries will continue apace as the innumerable populations of children come of age.

Caution must be added nonetheless insofar as demographic statistics in those countries are not always reliable, but there is little doubt that the trends are clear. Moreover, while European statistics on incoming Muslim legal immigrants can be counted on for accuracy, the countless illegal migrants tend to baffle the arithmetic and leave many data of this massive human movement in the dark. The lack of statistics in the Muslim countries of emigration, for either the legal or the illegal migrants to the West, further complicates the calculations that demographers have attempted thus far. One thing is certain: immense surpluses of Muslim manpower, for the most part uneducated and unskilled, find their way to European shores. When this human wave does not find outlets into the rich Gulf States, which usually elect trained Arab workers in their education system and their

bureaucracy, it sneaks its way into Western democracies, either as “political refugees” or as welcome manpower for manual jobs that Europeans are reluctant to do; or as illegal migrants who could quite easily slip through the porous European borders. When Europe changed the rules and began to tighten its control of the borders following the major terrorist attacks of Madrid and London in 2004-05, the thirty million strong Muslim population of Europe was already difficult to supervise due to the lax and liberal freedom of movement of Europeans across the entire expanse of the Union. Another source of demographic growth of the Muslim population in the West is domestic proselytization, which, though not massive at this point, produces some of the most devout and radical Muslims, like the black Muslims of America, and potential recruits for terrorism, like Richard Reid in the United Kingdom. In France alone, it is estimated that in the decade between 1995 and 2005, some fifty thousand French Christians have converted into Islam.

These figures amount in their aggregate to a Muslim population of about 6 percent in the European Union today, with countries like France reaching the 10 percent mark (6 out of 60 million of the total), while in other countries to something less than that (7 percent in the Netherlands and Belgium, 1 out of 15 million and 0.7 out of 10 million, respectively; in Scandinavia 5 percent or less; in Sweden 0.5 out of close to 10 million; in Denmark 0.2 out of 5 million; and in Norway and Finland even less). In the large-populated countries such as Germany, Britain, Italy, and Spain, though Muslims can be counted in the millions, they are diluted among the massive preponderant Christian environment and do not transcend a few percentage points for now. However, Muslim visibility and public prominence seem out of proportion to their real numbers for a number of reasons:

1. They are usually concentrated in the large cities and clustered together in certain neighborhoods, which in the eyes of the members of the host culture seem as having slipped out of their own jurisdiction. In many areas of Paris, Marseille, Malmo, Berlin, and so on, local Europeans feel as strangers (in French *“depayses”)* in their own countries.
2. Due to the background of the unskilled immigrants, who are usually uneducated, they feel alienated inasmuch as many of them preserve their languages and mores and are different in dress, food, and way of

life. They build up a high degree of frustration which occasionally explodes in violent demonstrations. Alienation, poverty, and frustration often lead many of the youth among the immigrant Muslim population to crime.

3. In all European countries which absorbed Muslim immigrants, statistics exist, that are not often publicized for fear of “bigotry” or “racism,” telling the sad story of Muslim prison inmates out of proportion to their rate in the population. That often drives the host countries to frustration and self-pitying when they realize that their generosity and openness in welcoming the immigrants and supporting their training and welfare often turned into a permanent burden on the state instead of a relief of its manpower shortage.
4. Muslim alienation not only has tended to lead them to build their own enclaves within their host societies, where even the forces of order sometimes do not dare to enter, but makes them insensitive to the general host population, something which in turn boosts the Europeans’ reluctance to absorb them into their culture. For example, mosques which call for prayer at odd hours, when recurring and perennial, may turn the previously quite neighborhoods into areas of friction. Or when naturalized Muslims demand, in the name of their new citizenship, that the cross that garnishes the national flags of their host countries be eliminated because it hurts their feelings, their shelter societies are stunned by what seems to them as a presumptuous demand.
5. The phenomenon of growing numbers of converts into Islam in major European countries such as France and Britain (fifty thousand in each in the past decade), some of whom became famous (like Cat Stevens who became Yussuf Islam) or infamous (like Richard Reid), though it contributes only marginally to demography, plays a growing role in the visibility of the Muslim community.
6. From time to time, scandals like forced marriages of young Muslim women in Europe or their murder to protect the “honor” of the family, the Rushdie affair of the 1990s, acts of terror and violent demonstrations like in the Cartoon affair of2005-06, all tend to raise the profile of Islam in Europe and make it seem particularly menacing.

On the other hand, several factors militate against an even faster rise of Muslim communitarian identity and demographic growth in Europe, as discussed in Amitai Etzioni's seminal work[6]

1. The large numbers of Muslims who have assimilated over the past generation or two in their European environment, especially the young who have been absorbed by the local educational systems, have grown ignorant of their original cultures and languages and are more interested in developing peaceful and successful careers than in spreading Islam or responding to its call. Those Muslims, whose rate among their community is hard to ascertain, are not likely to stand to be counted as Muslims, and may intermarry with the local folks and ultimately assimilate.
2. Precisely due to the ascendance of militant Islam in Europe and the West in general, with the attending violence that sometimes accompanies its assertion of its identity and its manifestation of disaffection and discontent, the more assimilated and quietist Muslims who are reluctant to be identified with their radical kin distance themselves from them and elect to melt unnoticed into the general population.
3. Unlike the radical militants who do not hide their intent to islamize European societies, by peaceful means if possible, through conversions and recruiting for terrorist operations, if necessary, the nonobservant Muslims on the contrary seem to have reconciled to the idea of integrating into their adoptive societies and state their intentions to maintain peace and to mind their own business. While the radicals would rather establish their own Muslim political parties, nonobservant Muslims indicate their will to adapt via affiliation to the existing political system.

As long as Islam lived within the traditional boundaries of Islamdom, its tensions and frictions with the West remained outside the domain of the Western public, except for politicians, diplomats, merchants, and military men who had to deal with it. Misunderstood, shunned, demonized as it may have been in the eyes of Europeans, it was remote and lay beyond the horizon. Similarly, when Muslim visitors arrived to the West since the turn of the twentieth century, for study or business, they were for the most part

respectful, even admirers, of its culture and modernity; they adopted a low-profile demeanor of a student who wished to learn and a self-effacing attitude of awe toward everything Western which was deemed superior. But with the rise of radical Islam in the past few decades, and the increase of Muslim immigration into the West which brought it into permanent contact with Western societies, Muslims learned to face up to their host societies and even to confront them in debate. Their gathered self-confidence, and self-assertion taught them that they could debate the West on par, without being arrested, humiliated, or even imprisoned or executed, as in their home countries. For the Europeans, the clash of civilizations which had taken place from time immemorial on the borders of Christendom moved into their own heartland and they were unprepared to face it, on the psychological and the societal levels. Convinced that their open and democratic societies would prevail and entice the new immigrants to abandoning their roots and identity, they were shocked to discover that the gap between the two populations had grown over the years. Far from bridging the differences that yawned between them and their unintegrated immigrants, the Europeans discovered they had, on the contrary, widened and the incompatibilities grew into clashes, the complaints into demands, and the debates into explosions of violence, so much so that once the Westerners realized that they were obliterating their traditionally homogeneous societies in favor of multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious (and at times even multilinguistic) ones, the social contract which held together their respective societies previously began dissipating, much to the chagrin of local nationalist parties and to the frustration of the rest.

The explosion of the Cartoon Affair throughout the world in early 2006 did not make matters easier for the Europeans, who saw their goodwill and hospitality toward Muslims “rewarded” by violent demonstrations around the globe, as if cartoons of the Prophet, insensitive as they may have been, could be a real reason for this eruption of outrage against the West, and not a simple and direct occasion or pretext to air Muslim general anger and frustration with the West. This will not facilitate the adherence of Turkey into the European Union either, primarily for demographic reasons, for, if the opponents of Turkey within the Union were thus far reluctant to let it in due to the Islamic Party that took the helm of power there since 2002, now they realize that the so-called Islamic fundamentalism almost invariably

translates into discord and trouble for Europe, and bringing Turkey in would mean not only freedom of movement of Turkish labor and nationals throughout Europe, but also spreading the message of Islam, and not necessarily only of the benevolent kind, into all corners of the continent. The numbers are staggering: with some 6-7 percent Muslims today (over thirty out of over four hundred million), frictions are already difficult; how much more so when the seventy-five million nation of Turks would join, raising the rate of Muslims to 20 percent (hundred out of five hundred million). The rapid growth of the Muslim population on the one hand and the shrinkage of the European family unit on the other would mean that, in the next generation, Europe may become half Muslim. If that is the will of the Europeans, then there is no faster or more efficient way to achieve that goal than admitting Turkey into the EU; but if they are concerned to preserve their Christian heritage and European culture, their technological advancement, and modern style of life, islamization of their societies is not the most hopeful avenue to pursue. Already second thoughts about Turkey have begun to take root in the EU. Britain, the most ardent proponent of Turkish integration into the system, has itself agreed to suspend the talks between the parties, when it realized that Turkish oppression of the Kurds continues unabated; that women are still discriminated against in Turkish society; and that Turkish school textbooks, which are monitored by the Union, contain thousands of cases of racism and human rights abuses, notably negative portrayals of Greeks, Jews, Kurds, and Armenians.[7]

Demography has a long-term effect on the chances of coexistence in countries where Muslims are in the minority, because of the built-in contradiction between the requirement of Muslims to live under Islamic rule, since only there the Law of Allah can be brought to bear, and the grim necessity for many Muslims to escape from the persecutions of their Muslim regimes in order to seek refuge in the West. Believers who live in non-Muslim lands must either regard their stay there as temporary, and in the meantime do their best to live their Muslim life undisturbed, or return to the Abode of Islam as soon as they can or try to turn their country of residence into a Muslim one by converting the society into Islam or seizing power in it. For this reason, the existence of Muslim minorities under non-Islamic rule has always alternately pursued these trajectories and driven the Muslim guest culture into a state of mind varying from a quietist acceptance of a permanent minority status to a violent rebellion. The response of the

Muslim minority depends in no small measure on the perceived threat posed to it by the majority host culture. Whenever coexistence with it seems feasible, as was the case with Muslim minorities in the West before the rise of fundamentalism among them, they could always say that as long that they could perform the obligations of their faith without inhibition, they could consider themselves as living within the enclaves of the Abode of Islam, a state of affairs they could bear indefinitely. But as soon as perceived oppression made their lives as Muslims untenable, and they diagnosed their position in consequence as dwellers of the Abode of War, they were set on a collision course with their hosts, and conflict ensued.

To this rather simplistic scheme one ought to introduce three more variables: first, the general Muslim environment, which when rising and embracing the road of militancy can draw behind it Muslim minorities who are fascinated by its power which compensates for their feelings of oppression, underprivileged status, and hopelessness in tackling the requirements of modern life. Then, the demographic data of the minority come into play, to wit, the larger the minority, to the point of constituting local majorities in certain areas, the more it feels self-confident to challenge the majority. Indeed, in areas where large concentrations of Muslims are clustered together, they feel strong enough to advance demands and to resort to violence or to threaten the use of violence if their demands are not fulfilled. Third, the nature of the regime under which they live plays its part too. Namely, if the regime is oppressive as in their own countries of origin, they would be less inclined to rebel, knowing what their punishment would entail;, but, paradoxically, under the liberal democratic rule of the West, it is easier for them to act to undermine it and seek its destruction although, or because, it gives them more leeway. This is the case with Muslims in the liberal democracies of the West in general.

Majority-minority relations in general are by nature dynamic and their fortunes usually hinge on the infringements upon the uneasy balance between the two parts of the equation. When the minority becomes or is perceived as a demographic, economic, or political menace to the majority, for example, fears and suspicions increase, followed by oppression on the part of the majority and self-imposed isolation by the minority, ultimately leading to alienation, conflict, separation, rebellion, and secession. All the while, both parties test the boundaries of cohabitation and coexistence and attempt to limit the autonomy of the minority on the one hand and pushing

it to its utmost on the other. The collision course is the result of the failure of the parties or one of them to stop on the verge of the precipice and instead their rush to trigger the violent explosion. These modalities come in cycles: material acculturation of the minority (in speech, dress, manners, mores, customs) goes a long way to condition it to become more sensitive to its environment and to the interests of the host culture. So next time it rebels, it finds that it had accumulated more affinities with the majority than ever before and that its rebellion more than states its disgust with the majority, proclaims its fear lest it be engulfed by it. Following periods of assimilation into the majority, voices of renewal are raised, warning the minority that unless it revives its roots it runs the imminent danger of total disappearance. Revival—religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or otherwise—breeds opposition and rejection by the majority culture, sometimes leading to violent rebellion and attempts at secession by the minority and its brutal repression, so as to remove the perceived threat that it poses to the majority, and back to square one. During this trajectory from quietism to violence, the minority people often embrace multi-identities, in periods of assimilation emphasizing the majority culture, in eras of conflict asserting their own ethno-cultural-religious-linguistic distinctiveness. Like the modalities of coexistence themselves, identities also vary, combining various components from the composite menu from which they are constantly called to choose.

These rules apply handily to Muslim minorities the world over, as their current predicament in non-Muslim lands readily illustrates. One more element is needed nonetheless to explain the mechanics of these dynamics, and that is charismatic leadership, without which the transition from quietism to rebellion is difficult, nay impossible. For if acculturation, assimilation, quietism, and a passive mood toward the majority require no leadership, just indifference and a societal *laissez-faire,* the traumatic crossover to rebellion, violence, and upheaval, which require risk-taking and a revolutionary spirit, depend, much on a political or religious leader who commands authority and attracts followers. In the case of Muslim minorities, the actor is more likely to be religious or to combine religion and politics due to the inextricability of the sacred and the profane, the holy and the secular in Islamic political tradition. A distinction is called for nevertheless between the activity of religious actors in Islamic-majority countries and Muslim-minority ones. If we take it for granted that a certain

convergence of events is what provides the religious actor with the opportunity to act, it also goes without saying that in situations of Muslim-minority existence the field of friction between the Muslim guest culture and the majority host culture is usually wider and more thorny than in homogeneous Muslim countries. For, granted that within Muslim entities too, there are wide-open possibilities for conflict, as strife abounds on behalf of the Muslim majority toward non-Muslim minorities (Sudan, Iran, Egypt, Syria, etc.) or between different Muslim sects and factions (Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Gulf States, Iraq, and the like); the situation is different when Muslim minorities are concerned. The reason is that within Muslim-majority states it is the official government who conducts the repression against other factions or minorities, and while the oppressed (e.g., the *Gama'at* or the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, or the Copts in Egypt, or the Alawites in Syria) usually produce charismatic leaders who lead the resistance as religious actors, the latter seldom challenge the state legitimacy. All they wish is to remove the regime, alter its policies, or gain a share of power within the state apparatus. However, since Muslims are required to live in Islamic lands, their presence under non-Islamic rule poses insoluble problems which end in crisis and unrest. Under such convergence of events, where the plight of the Muslim minority is identified as "religious," only recognized religious actors who rise to meet the challenge are capable of dealing with it for the most part.

There was a time when Muslim minorities were quite limited in numbers and scope of dispersion throughout the West, usually as a result of interaction with the colonial powers who encouraged a certain amount of "natives" to tread their cultural ways in their own metropolitan centers, and some of them intermarried and stayed. However, the large waves of Muslim immigrants since the mid-twentieth century to the Americas, Australia, and Europe, and more so the opening labor markets in the West to Muslim "guest-workers" *(Gastarbeiter)*, coupled with important movements of conversion to Islam as a result of intense Muslim *da'wa* (mission), have dramatically increased the numbers of Muslims in those countries. Moreover, the "guests" have come to regard themselves as permanent residents with all attending privileges of citizenship and social benefits. In an interesting twist, not only do they not regard their presence outside the realm of Islam any longer as temporary, embarrassing, and calling for justification or rectification, but with the birth in place of the second and

third generations, who grow to learn the languages, cultures, and ways of their new habitats, the process of their acculturation into their new homelands has accelerated. As long as their rate in the general populations of their new countries was negligible, and the sociopolitical environment was liberal (like in the United States, Canada, Australia, Israel, and Europe), the social pluralism and individual freedom of worship were advocated by the Muslim minorities. Under oppressive regimes like the Soviet or the Chinese, the Muslims were quick to adopt material acculturation into their host society, with all the trappings of language, dress, education, and participation in the elites and social customs. The core of the faith was kept almost intact, however, with the Muslim calendar, festivals, dietary laws, worship, and places of prayer preserved to the extent possible. This was easier in areas where Muslim minorities were more sizeable and commanded the critical mass necessary to entertain communal life, and much more difficult when the Muslim population was so sparse as to render any public display of Muslim identity impractical.

These situations of rebellious guest cultures, who no longer accept their minority status, can give rise to violence that is aimed either at secession or various forms of autonomy, or grows into an irredentist claim when the minority dwells in adjacent proximity/territorial continuity to their mother country where the main bulk of their people is located (the Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, the Hungarians of Transylvania and Voivodina, the Sudeten Germans prior to World War II, the Arabs of Israel, and the Turkic-Muslim population of eastern Turkestan). Such claims, which may be bolstered especially when the minority becomes too sizeable to govern or grows into a local majority in its area of residence, gain currency when the demographic growth of the minority is so much faster than that of the host culture, as to arouse hopes of a “democratic” takeover by the one-man one-vote device, the like of which had worked in Zimbabwe and South Africa. In other words, minorities of this sort, be they national or religious, do not seek to merge through integration as in Brazil and create a raceless society where no value is given to creed or original culture, but to dominate through victory and enslavement of the others when the numbers so allow. In these situations, religious actors find a fertile ground to act, by advocating demographic growth in their communities, denigrating the majority culture so as to discourage acculturation into it, creating an atmosphere of separateness and strife, inventing irredentist claims, and

mobilizing their community to obey them in the pursuance of those ambitions.

When Muslim minorities become frustrated by the unworkability of a pluralistic society, for example, in Cyprus, the Philippines, Israel, China, and more and more within European countries, either because they believe they are discriminated against or their expectations are not met, they become antagonistic to their host society, so much more so when they perceive the majority as having transgressed the limits of previous coexistence and encroached upon their freedom of worship or conduct. In such cases, they use Western vocabulary (freedom, tolerance, democracy, human rights, etc.) to impress upon their hosts that while they wish to play by the rules of their adoptive countries, it is the latter that violate them. In more extreme cases, like with some Muslim radical leaders (religious actors *par excellence)* in London, they claim that they came to Europe in order to change it, not to be reshaped by it, or they reject Western attitudes lock, stock, and barrel (like the banning of the veil in French schools). This sets the Muslim minority, especially the radical elements in its midst, on the collision course with the host authorities. Militant elements among this disaffected minority may seek political or cultural autonomy (the London Muslim "Parliament" or various national or international Muslim associations, or organizations of imams and mosque leaders, or the heads of the Arab local councils in Israel, or the demand for autonomy and for an "Arab" or "Muslim" university and other separate institutions). In India Muslims had conquered the land and subjugated Hinduism, but when Muslim power was eroded by the British, Islam sought and achieved separation from the Hindus for the most part, rather than submit to the democratic rule of modern India that would have allowed the Hindus to exercise political domination over the Muslims. When the majority of Indian Muslims established their own state (Pakistan), their *ulama* spoke of the reinstitution of the *Shari'a* as their state law. There was no alternative to this arrangement if one bears in mind the fact that Islam is incompatible with other political ideologies. Maulana Mawdoodi, the prominent Indian Muslim modernist, has put it this way: "To be a Muslim and adopt a non-Muslim viewpoint is only meaningless. 'Muslim nationalist' and 'Muslim Communist' are contradictory terms as 'Communist Fascist' and 'chaste prostitute.'"[8]

Thus, as orthodox Muslims see it, and much more so the radicals among them, Islam is ideally an either-or affair. Either Islamic law and institutions are given full expression and dominate state life or, failing that, if the state is non-Islamic, Muslims should try to reverse the situation or leave. In practice, however, things are not so clear-cut. As long as an appearance of peace and accommodation can be maintained, the minority Muslim community, although entertaining a vague hope for the fulfillment of its political aspirations at some future time, can contain the discrepancy between dream and reality, and the tension between the two can go unresolved. But if persecution of the Muslim minority is intensified, for example, in nondemocratic countries, to the point where no real Muslim life can be ensured, and when a practical opportunity arises, the minority Muslims are likely to seize it and proclaim either a separate Muslim entity or a Muslim state regardless of whether the Muslim population is a majority or a minority in the territory in question, for an Islamic state can encompass either. Muslims had experienced both a Muslim majority under non-Islamic rule as in Christian Valencia where Muslims outnumbered the Christians four to one,[9] or the modern Muslim colonies under minority Christian rule, and a Muslim minority rule in Hindu-majority India and the Umayyad Muslim rule over a Christian-majority state in the Iberian Peninsula. It is Muslim rule, then, that defines the borders of the Abode of Islam, not Muslim majorities or minorities. In recent years the enhanced stature of Islam has led the Muslim center to take a keener and deeper interest in the minorities on its periphery. This renewed interest has been manifested in the resolutions of the Islamic Conferences which have been bringing under one roof delegates from some fifty-seven Muslim-majority countries representing some 1.5 billion believers. More interest has been taken by remote Muslim communities in participating in the pilgrimage to Mecca, where two million people from all nationalities share their fellowship with their brothers and enhance thereby the identity of the universal *umma.* These are the building blocks of Muslim-minority discontent and rebellion, which in our days may lead to what is termed “terrorism.”

Despite the initial naïve days of Muslim immigration into Europe, when it was a matter of course to assume that Muslim minorities would integrate painlessly into the much more prosperous nations where they made their new homes, difficulties began to emerge from the outset, which were dismissed as pangs of acculturation. But as the years elapsed, the Muslim

communities grew, and their Muslim radicalism came to the surface, the illusion of integration began to fade, substituted by the illusory vision of multicultural societies, which made cultural concessions to the immigrants in order to accommodate them and make them partners of the system, not its clients. But that too, far from satisfying the Muslims of Europe, whose growing numbers gave them the necessary self-confidence to defy the system and even start acting against it, only further increased the sense of alienation in their midst from their host countries. The Europeans, in turn, sensing that their liberalism had turned against them, began to try to backpedal, but it was too late, and the collision course became inevitable. A survey, done in Europe and published in April 2006, found that the degree of anti-Muslim bias was "dangerously high" among the Europeans and "can lead to a vicious circle of isolation and radicalization of the immigrant youth." They were not willing to admit that they were already dragged into that vicious circle and that by abstaining from pronouncing the word "Muslim," substituting for it instead "immigrant youth," "suburb youth," "immigrant population," or "unemployed youth," they were simply hiding their heads in the sand. Beate Winkler, the head of the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, told that hundred European imams convened in Vienna to discuss integration of their communities into Europe and that European countries had enough laws to foster integration, but they were not well implemented, and real issues were often avoided. The Europeans attending the conference agreed that attitudes toward Islam had hardened since September 11 (2001) and the subsequent attacks in Madrid, London, Paris, Amsterdam, and other places. Winkler suggested that Europe could help further by supporting mosque construction, providing time for Muslim religious broadcast, and assuring proper education of imams and Islamic religious teachers. On the other hand, she demanded that work be actively conducted against Muslim extremism, honor killings, forced marriages, spousal abuse, and self-imposed isolation, in order to help solve issues arising from *halal* butchering or the wearing of headscarves.[10]

Sometimes, the hysterical fear from Muslim immigration can cause individual harm to innocent Muslim families which have nothing to do with violence or subversion, but these are the unavoidable ricochets when one attempts to chop down the existing wild growth of illegal immigration or to diminish the recalcitrance of the legal immigrants who could not adapt. A case in point was cited in the *Washington Post* recently.[11] Eight-year-old

Andrianina Ralison of Bourg-La-Reine, France, was described by his teacher as one of the top achievers in her class. This boy from Madagascar was also an illegal immigrant. And under the tough new immigration laws, Andrianina—along with hundreds of other schoolchildren and their parents across France—was scheduled to be deported to his native country the day after school ended on July 4, 2006. “Why don’t they want us here?” Holiarisoa Ralison, 31, said of her son the day she received the deportation order. All across western Europe (and in Israel too), this kind of argument is raised by local nationals fearful of losing their national identity and anxious over struggling economies, while seeking new ways to stem explosive growth in immigrant populations. For now, the political consensus in France is to crack down, and since fall 2005—as part of tougher new policies—authorities began pulling immigrant children out of school to be deported with their families. But many teachers, classmates, and parents rebelled. Teachers at a school in central France hid students from police, even at the risk of being fined thousands of dollars for helping illegal immigrants. Other schools went on strike to protest the sudden evictions. Students and teachers staged street demonstrations.

Local town halls run by Socialist officials who oppose the government’s increasingly hard-line approach supported many of the families in their legal appeals to remain in the country. Interior Minister (then President) Nicolas Sarkozy, architect of the new assault on illegal immigration, relented and declared a temporary amnesty for families with children in school and agreed not to deport them until the end of that school year of 2005–06. “Kids, teachers and parents are angry with the situation,” said Richard Moyon, founder of the Education Without Borders Network, an association of teachers that organized protests as part of its efforts to assist youngsters threatened with deportation. “One of the roles of a teacher is to teach kids the ideals of the republic— freedom and equality. How can teachers explain what freedom and equality are when you’ve got in front of your eyes this kind of example of children seeing their friends deported?”[12] But these good-hearted people forgot that one of the principles of the Republic is also to abide by the law, hence the imperative of seizing those who have infiltrated illegally and deporting them. Otherwise, the entire idea of border control and of legal migration would collapse. After the ascension to power of the Socialists under Francois Hollande in the 2010s, there is a

marked improvement in the deportation programs, but that did not decrease the Muslim acts of terrorism against the Republic, as we saw in 2015.

Following pressure from Moyon's group and sympathetic politicians, the French Interior Ministry issued new guidelines to the local governing authorities that decide whether to grant residency papers to illegal immigrants. Families may be given more favorable consideration if their children have spent at least a year in French schools, were born in France, or arrived at a young age and speak French fluently. The guidelines are advisory only; local authorities are not required to use them. The French government estimates that illegal immigrants number between two hundred thousand and four hundred thousand. Officials suggest that at least fifty thousand of those are children; advocacy groups say the number of children could total one hundred thousand. In the past few years, French authorities have stepped up raids on city streets and at subway stations in immigrant neighborhoods, pressured employers to stop hiring illegal workers, and rejected larger numbers of applications from illegal immigrants seeking visas. Deportations have increased by nearly 70 percent, from 11,692 in 2003 to 19,489 in 2005, according to the Interior Ministry.

Even with the new guidelines the fate of the Ralison family remains uncertain. Holiarisoa Ralison was nabbed on April 18 in a police raid at a train station that is a 15-minute walk from the building where she lives. After 2 hours in the local jail, she was handed a letter and released. "It said I had to be taken to the border," said the mother of two. "I started to cry. I felt like I'd been stabbed, that this was the end for my family if we had to go back to this poor country." She appealed the decision and appeared before a judge a few days later. "The judge asked if I had anything to say for myself," she recounted. "I said, 'We became outlaws to have better futures for our kids—not to hurt anybody.'" She lost the appeal. In contrast to the United States, where many illegal immigrants slip through porous southwestern borders, or Spain, where thousands of desperate African immigrants have arrived on leaky boats, most immigrants arrive in France on tourist visas. Like the Ralisons, many were born in former French colonies in the Middle East and Africa where cultural and linguistic ties with France remain. While the United States vigorously screens tourist visas from applicants in developing nations, France historically has been lenient in granting them to citizens of impoverished former colonies.[13]

But then France had to pay for its leniency, at the expense of the immigrants who, for a while, entertained the illusion of being integrated in the culture of their choice, only to see themselves rejected and deported. Nirina Ralison had arrived at Charles de Gaulle International Airport in Paris from Madagascar in the spring of 2002 with a visa for a three-month internship at a French pharmaceutical laboratory, sponsored by his employer in Madagascar. He never started the internship. Instead, he found a job as a deliveryman and lived in a cramped apartment with six other men. A year later, he'd saved enough money to fly his wife, Holiarisoa, to France. She left their five-year-old son and two-year-old daughter with her stepmother in Madagascar. A year and a half later, in December 2004, the couple brought their children to France on tourist visas. They enrolled their son, Andrianina, and later their daughter, Raitrosoa, in local French schools. The French government does not require schoolchildren to have legal residency papers. Holiarisoa found jobs baby-sitting and cleaning houses. Both parents—who spoke French before their arrival in France—took precautions common among illegal immigrants. They always paid for subway and train tickets, never trying to sneak through gates, even when money was short. Nirina worked for multiple employers, in part so he wouldn't be spotted by authorities in the same places or driving the same routes. "Even without papers, life here is 10 times better than in Madagascar," said Holiarisoa, sitting in the living room of the family's small apartment, where mother, father, and two children share the same bedroom—adults on a lower bunk bed, children in the upper.

In Madagascar, Holiarisoa had been an office administrator for a construction company, making about $66 a month. Her husband made about $75 a month working in a pharmaceutical lab. In France, she said she earns about $875 a month baby-sitting and cleaning houses while her husband brings home about $1,125 a month from his multiple jobs. But the greatest motivation, she said, was for the children. At home, most youngsters dropped out of school by the time they were ten or eleven years old, she said. Now the family lives in daily fear of deportation. "Every time we hear a car stop, we think it's the police coming to get us," she said. "We don't sleep at night. If my husband is late from work, I start panick-ing."[14] Even though it is not clear from this report whether this family is Muslim or otherwise, its case is worth citing because it tells the story of almost every illegal immigrant family, most of which are Muslim, as one individual who

sneaked in brings in his nuclear and then his extended family, making the demography such a scarecrow for the Europeans.

A warning by former head of the Israeli Mossad, Efraim Halevy, that “by mid-century major cities in Germany, Russia will have Muslim majority” did not add much comfort to the frightened Europeans, not so much owing to the credibility of the speaker as to the authority and reputation of his previous job. Indeed, the former Mossad director said during a meeting of the board of trustees of the Technion in Haifa that, in his estimation, by the middle of the century major cities in Germany will have a Muslim majority and so will many member districts of the Russian Federation. Halevy spoke of Islamic terrorism, saying it is “the main problem of the world today.”

”We are in the middle of World War Three, and I see no end to it,” he said. Halevy stressed that he had spoken recently with a Russian official who disagreed with his prediction regarding the growing Muslim population in Europe. The former head of the Mossad also addressed the issue of Hamas, which could be interpreted as an encouragement to the European security establishment in battling its own Muslim terrorists, saying it is “a young movement, consisting of only 19 years-old, and it is a ruthless enemy of Israel [and of the West]. The success of the Israeli defense establishment in fighting this organization is immense.”[15] He implied then that while the immigration and growth of the Muslim populations in Europe was unstoppable, to the point that they might grow to become local majorities as years wear on, their terrorist threat was manageable and controllable. But while Europeans were certainly concerned about their safety and about the inability of their governments to protect them in their own lands from Muslim terrorism in the short run, they were much more worried about what will become of their nations, countries, cultures, and religions in the long run, should the waves of immigration and the rate of Muslim population growth not subside. All the more so since there is lately a tendency of the old jihadists who had left Europe to go to Iraq, Syria, and other battlefields, to return to their European bases and pose new threats to their adoptive countries. So, while the Saudis were erecting a fence with their Iraqi border, to keep out any returning *jihadis,* the Europeans will have to accept them back thanks to their ‘human rights’ pieties, with all the dire consequences involved.

According to a report of AFP, the returnees are highly motivated, battle-hardened, mobile, and therefore, dangerous. And the return of Europe's *jihadists* from Iraq, Syria, and other jihadi battlefields is giving the continent's intelligence services nightmares. As far back as October 2005, Iraqi Interior Minister Bayan Jabr warned that intercepted correspondence between Abu Musab Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, and other figures in the movement had revealed a decision to send large numbers of Islamist volunteers back to their countries of origin to wage holy war. Mr. Jabr said several hundred militant fighters had left for home by fall 2005. Baltasar Garzon, a Spanish judge who has led inquiries into al-Qa'ida in Spain, said in an interview that there were indications that large numbers of veterans of the Iraqi jihad were returning to Europe. "I cannot say how many cases we are talking about, but it is a question of logic. Up until now, inquiries were focused on volunteers traveling to Iraq. Now we are beginning to get indications that they have begun to return," he said. "Infrastructures are being put in place to accommodate them," added the judge, who spoke from the French city of Lyon, where he was attending an Interpol meeting. Indeed, in the past few years, hundreds of jihadist volunteers from almost every country in Europe have traveled to Iraq, via Syria, Egypt, Turkey, or Iran. Once there, they have been more or less integrated into the anti-US resistance, often to commit Islamikaze ("suicide") attacks. In 2005, the prestigious International Institute for Strategic Studies in London estimated the number of foreign volunteers in Iraq to be at least thousand.

On May 11, 2006, the head of France's domestic security service, Pierre de Bousquet, indicated that about fifteen young French people, obviously Muslim, remained in and around Iraq. At least nine have been killed there. Foreign volunteers "have become a bit of a nuisance there and are being urged to return to Europe to pursue *jihad* there. We have seen a few examples," he said. Claude Moniquet, director of the Brussels-based European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center, estimated that there are "several hundred" former fighters from Iraq in western Europe and says they are "potentially very dangerous." "Given the high motivation and the youth of these Iraqi volunteers, the risk that they will start to commit terrorist acts on European soil is very real," he said. "It is pretty much impossible to organize the surveillance of several hundred people across Europe," he stressed. "Effective surveillance of one person requires an

absolute minimum of 12 to 15 officers. Multiply that by several hundred, and you need thousands. And even then, we're talking about a makeshift operation."[16] This is what gave the Europeans good reasons to be wary of their Muslims. Ten years later, due to the attraction of IS, and precisely because Arab regimes loyal to the West have joined the Western coalition fighting against it, the multitude of Muslim volunteers who dwell in the West and flock East to meet their destiny has increased in numbers and in commitment. And this has been the greatest headache of the security apparatuses in the West and the major source of concern of its populations.

Under the heading of "Europe's Debate on Immigration Is Dysfunctional", *the Economist* had some scathing criticism to make.[17] It asserted that America was not the only country wrestling with immigration. As the Senate was passing its version of an immigration bill, Spain was calling on the European Union to help it stem a flood of migrants from West Africa to the Canary Islands. The EU sent patrol boats and aircraft to the seas which thousands have crossed (and where hundreds have died) in the hope of getting into Europe while Britain and France were reforming their immigration laws, and Britain and Italy were fretting over the deportation of immigrant criminals. Six countries favored European "integration contracts," namely tests of would-be citizens' knowledge of their host countries as a precondition for getting passports. But if both sides of the Atlantic were experiencing similar upheavals, there was still a big difference between their debates. Americans were letting it all hang out, while tumultuous demonstrations clogged the streets, and politicians, lobbyists, and interest groups clogged the talk shows. In Europe, by contrast, debate does not grip countries in the same way. After second-generation immigrants staged their suburban car-flagrations in France in late 2005, the prime minister weirdly downplayed the riots' significance. Questions about the impact of immigration merged into issues such as asylum, and even Islamist terrorism. Debate existed, but it was distorted and submerged. "The big difference in the way Europeans and Americans look at immigration," argued Kathleen Newland of the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, DC, "springs from the fact that America protects its welfare system from immigrants but leaves its labour markets open, while the EU protected its labour markets and left its welfare system open." Immigrants to Europe were welcomed with welfare benefits but could not get jobs (their unemployment rate was far higher than average). America

made it easy even for illegal immigrants to get jobs but stopped even legal ones claiming means-tested welfare benefits or subsidized housing.

The result was that in America political debate centered on illegal immigration, and there was no sense that legal immigrants imposed burdens on others. This obviously emanates from the fact that America is basically made out of immigrants, while Europe had a homogeneous culture and tradition which has now to stand the test of absorbing strangers into its midst. Therefore in Europe, even legal immigrants are often seen as sponging on others through welfare receipts; and the fact that some have taken jobs, which would not otherwise be done so cheaply, is forgotten. In Europe, says Danny Sriskandarajah of Britain's Institute for Public Policy Research, it is harder to talk about immigration as an economic issue. Instead, all migrants are caught in a web of suspicion. Politically, the debate is different, too. In America, immigration is a mainstream issue and splits both parties, Republicans especially. Not so in Europe. With few exceptions, the parties most willing to raise immigration as a political issue lie outside the main-stream—notably (though not only) far-right parties such as France's National Front and the Danish People's Party. The Netherlands is an exception: there, the politics of immigration entered the mainstream after two critics of multiculturalism were murdered. Britain is a partial exception, too: both Labour and Conservatives have espoused the cause of immigration control. But for the most part, big parties of center-left and center-right have not made deep reform of immigration a high priority.[18] Be it as it may, ten years later the respective approaches toward migrants have diverged even further. In Americas, the main bulk of the refugees comes from adjoining Mexico, a mass of humanity that can be absorbed into the United States without posing much of a cultural or religious obstacle and certainly without raising the specter of terrorism that would have been invoked in the context of a Muslim immigration. But in Europe such fears do exist, especially after the emergence of ISIS in 2014, and the concrete mobilization of Muslim youth in the West to its fighting forces.

Alarming analyses that have the virtue of offering a new, more realistic perspective, by knowledgeable and concerned personalities in Europe in the face of the mounting immigration, must be heeded too. They are not written by "Islamophobes," but by strategists and demographers who envision a dark future for Europe, should the present trends continue. Some make

outlandish suggestions, but they also consider the device of multiculturalism, which had become the new fetish in Europe, and has allowed Islam to come to Europe and to keep its separate identity, instead of integrating into existing cultures. So, rather than speaking about pluralism, which would have allowed various groups from different backgrounds to rally around a social contract made out of common core values, in order to maintain a shared state and societal entity, multiculturalism has encouraged Muslim and other immigrants to stick to their separate cultures, languages, religions, and so on. Muslims have also demanded that their own values, which are often contradictory with the host culture, gain equal footing and equal time. (In the Netherlands this was dubbed the “pillars of Dutch society.”) This process by nature brings about disintegration of society and gives rise to frictions and competition between the various groups for the state resources, instead of rallying them together for the common good. The result is that groups like Muslims, who wish to live by their standards, demand special privileges in maintaining their customs, language, religious training, and even habits that run counter to European tradition, like forced marriages and honor killings.

Thus, even while policymakers are still grappling with how to assimilate immigrants, these analyses suggest that “assimilation was becoming redundant”; in other words, the problem of assimilation has come and gone before politicians have even acknowledged its existence. For example, when the question of volatile young men who fail to find a vocation (or wife!) keeps appearing again and again in much of the European media, it is not made any easier by the Muslim penchant for polygamy, whereby some men grab more than their fair share of women. As long ago as the 1970s, one used to read about males from the Gulf going in search of wives in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, because of a scarcity in their home countries (which therefore prohibitively raised the “bride price” for local women among the underclasses). Now, these problems are inflicted on European cultures and societies. One of Britain’s most senior military strategists has warned that Western civilization faced a threat on par with the barbarian invasions that destroyed the Roman Empire. In an apocalyptic vision of security dangers, Rear Admiral Chris Parry said future migrations would be comparable to the Goths and Vandals while North African “Barbary” pirates could be attacking yachts and beaches in the Mediterranean within ten years. Europe, including Britain, could be

undermined by large immigrant groups with little allegiance to their host countries—a “reverse colonization” as Parry described it. These groups would stay connected to their homelands by the Internet and cheap flights. The idea of assimilation was becoming redundant, he said.

The warnings by Parry of what could threaten Britain over the next thirty years were delivered to senior officers and industry experts at a *conference* in June 2006. Parry, head of the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Center at the Ministry of Defence, was charged with identifying the greatest challenges that will frame national security policy in the future. If a security breakdown occurred, he said, it was likely to be brought on by environmental destruction and a population boom, coupled with technology and radical Islam. The result for Britain and Europe, Parry warned, could be “like the 5th century Roman empire facing the Goths and the Vandals.” Parry pointed to the mass migration which disaster in the Third World could unleash. “The diaspora issue is one of my biggest current concerns,” he said. “Globalisation makes assimilation seem redundant and old-fashioned . . . [the process] acts as a sort of reverse colonisation, where groups of people are self-contained, going back and forth between their countries, exploiting sophisticated networks and using instant communication on phones and the internet.” Third World instability would lick at the edges of the West as pirates attacked holidaymakers from fast boats. “At some time in the next 10 years it may not be safe to sail a yacht between Gibraltar and Malta,” said the admiral. Parry, an Oxford graduate, was not claiming that all the threats would necessarily come to fruition but he was warning of what was likely to happen if dangers were not addressed by politicians. He foresaw wholesale moves by the armed forces to robots, drones, nanotechnology, lasers, microwave weapons, space-based systems, and even “customized” nuclear and neutron bombs. Lord Boyce, the former chief of the Defence Staff, welcomed Parry’s analysis. “Bringing it together in this way shows we have some very serious challenges ahead,” he said. “The real problem is getting them taken seriously at the top of the government.”[19]

The paradigm of ancient Rome has been a subject of serious public discussion lately in the context of immigration policy. Boris Johnson, the British Conservative MP and journalist, produced a book and television series drawing parallels between the European Union and the Roman Empire. Terry Jones, the former Monty Python star, meanwhile, has spoken

up for the barbarians' technological and social achievements in a television series and has written: "We actually owe far more to the so-called 'barbarians' than we do to the men in togas." Parry identified the most dangerous flashpoints by overlaying maps showing the regions most threatened by factors such as agricultural decline, booming youth populations, water shortages, rising sea levels, and (radical) Islam. He predicted that as flood or starvation strikes, the most dangerous zones will be Africa, particularly the northern half; most of the Middle East and Central Asia as far as northern China; a strip from Nepal to Indonesia; and perhaps eastern China. He pinpointed 2012–18 as the time when the current global power structure was likely to crumble. Rising nations such as China, India, Brazil, and Iran will challenge America's sole superpower status. This will come as "irregular activity" such as terrorism and organized crime, and "white companies" of mercenaries burgeon in lawless areas. The effects will be magnified as borders become more porous and some areas sink beyond effective government control. Some of these predictions were already fulfilled in areas of upheaval threatened by Muslim radicals in Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen.

Not only do native Muslims share some of this thinking and occasional activities against their host countries in Europe, but so do, and much more so, European Muslim converts who lend an aura of "native religion" to Islam, no longer introduced by foreigners into Christiandom, but followed by native Europeans and thus completely legitimate. Indeed, British Muslim converts, for example, have emerged as successors to erstwhile Muslim preachers Abu Hamza and Omar Bakri, the leaders of the radical groups that wanted Britain ruled by Islamic law, who were in the meantime arrested and convicted. *The Times* has obtained transcripts of Omar Brooks, now known as Abu Izzadeen, preaching holy war (Jihad) and discussing killing Tony Blair in a sermon in London. Abu Izzadeen had previously described the July 7 (2005) bombings as "completely praiseworthy" and organized demonstrations in support of the September 11 hijackers. His organization, the Saved Sect, of which he became head, was formed from the remnants of the disbanded extremist group *al-Muhajirun,* which the government intended to proscribe. However, it is not on the Home Office's list of 40 banned terrorist organizations, and an official spokeswoman refused to comment on whether it could be outlawed.

The Crown Prosecution Service has not ruled out charges against Abu Izzadeen, which may include solicitation to murder and withholding information about acts of terrorism. Abu Izzadeen, in his thirties, was born into a Christian family of Jamaican origin, in Hackney, east London, and was known as Trevor to some acquaintances. He converted to Islam at the age of seventeen and is believed to have become involved with Bakri at Finsbury Park mosque in the late 1990s. Before he was fully radicalized, Abu Izzadeen trained and worked as an electrician. He eventually chose a new name, which means "Might of the Faith" in Arabic, and immersed himself in his new religion. He married and moved to Leyton, east London, with his wife and three young children. Vitriolic lectures for their website were recorded by Bakri, even when he was already in exile in Lebanon. But Abu Izza-deen had started preaching sermons and posted them on the website, suggesting that he has taken over as emir of the Saved Sect. He is one of a generation of young British-born radical converts to step into the shoes of notorious clerics such as Bakri, Abu Qatada, and Abu Hamza al-Masri. Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada were also serving a term in jail under antiterrorism laws. The Saved Sect, also known as the Saviour Sect, rejects democracy and wants Britain to adopt *Shari'a*, or Islamic law. It believes that it is the only group representing the true Islamic path, but has links with another *al-Muhajirun* successor, *al-Ghuraba'* (The Strangers), whose leader was arrested during extremist protests against the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammed in early 2006, known as the Cartoon Affair.[20]

In lectures given at a London location, Abu Izzadeen said that a war was being fought to make Islamic law "completely dominant" in Britain, and that "all Jews and Christians are going to hell fire." He also praised Mullah Omar, the *Taliban* leader, saying: "This man is a winner." His lectures, entitled "The Christian Crusades"—parts 1 and 2, describe conflict in the Middle East and Britain as a present-day crusade. Abu Izzadeen said:

> There is a war here [in Britain]. Maybe you don't have weapons, but there are arrests against the Muslim community, there is brutality by the police. It is a form of war against the Muslims here as well If I said to you we're going to conquer Rome, or if I said to you, we're going to kill George Bush and we're going to kill Tony Blair, you would say to me: "Which come first bro?" . . . Muslims do not

> "need to stand by the British flag. . . . There is without doubt a war taking place between the Muslims and the non-Muslims . . . you must take part in the struggle. . . Tony Blair is a *taghoot* [believer of false religions]. The British forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the police in the UK, they are all fighting for the sake of *taghoot'*.'[21]

When Mr. Blair announced after the London bombings of 2005 that he would ban "the successor organisation of *al-Muhajirun"* the group praised the September 11 terrorists, describing them as the "Magnificent 19." Legislation tightening the Terrorism Act came into force some months later, when it became illegal to glorify or incite terrorism. A Home Office spokeswoman said: "The list of proscribed organisations is kept under constant review. The Terrorism Act 2006 widens the criteria of proscription to include those groups which glorify terrorism. All possible candidates for proscription will be considered against these criteria". The Saved Sect website also carried a statement from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the commander of al-Qa'ida in Iraq. On the BBC program Newsnight in 2005, Abu Izzadeen said that the July 7 bombings would make people "wake up and smell the coffee." He added that he would never denounce "suicide bombings," "even if my own family was to suffer, because we always stand with the Muslims regardless of the consequences," and elaborated on his sect's program:

> We can envisage that, if alive in the UK today, Jesus would undoubtedly have supported jihad in Afghanistan and Iraq, as opposed to the capitalist-driven US-led alliance . . . and would also have been no doubt interned under the Home Secretary Mr Clarke's new terrorism laws, thereby languishing in Belmarsh Prison. . . . The call of moderate and apostate "Muslims" [of the Muslim Council of Britain] upon the Metropolitan Police to take action and arrest the "extremists" behind the peaceful protests in central London (against the cartoons of Prophet Muhammad) was indeed a call of apostasy and betrayal. They have repeatedly called for the arrest and deportation of a vast number of Islamic activists, including scholars such as Sheikh Abu Hamza, Sheikh Faisal and Sheikh Abu Qatada—may Allah assist them and release them from captivity. . . . Since the majority of Muslims living in the West are

> on the brink of committing apostasy (e.g. by voting for man-made law and allying with the disbelievers), it is important for us to identify the ways in which they are leaving the fold of Islam and tackle these problems directly. . . . If we look to the reality of the so-called mosques in Britain today, hardly any are built by Muslims . . . therefore, they cannot be considered to be mosques. These halls have become places of corruption, calling Muslims to vote, inviting *kuffar* (non-Muslim) MPs and prime ministers, as well as lying about Allah, His Messenger and the religion of Islam. It is even considered to be a form of heresy to call these places Houses of Allah. . . . Sodomy, bestiality and incest are all crimes that are acceptable in un-Islamic societies. Recently the British government legalised homosexual marriages. It was not enough that they allowed homosexuals to practice their vile filth openly, but they felt the need to take a step further into the pits of humanity.[22]

All this causes much less outrage in Britain than if it occurred in Muslim lands, which execute their citizens for homosexuality and apostasy in their own countries. A comparative story on two converts in Britain, who then became more fanatic than the most extremist Muslims, was reported by the *Times*.[23] One of them, David Copeland, a neo-Nazi whose ideas were said to be the inspiration for the man who let off a nail bomb in Central London in 1999, has converted to an extremist form of Islam. Another, David Myatt, a founder of the hard-line British National Socialist Movement (NSM) who has been jailed for racist attacks, has changed his name to Abdul Aziz ibn Myatt. Copeland, who is serving six life sentences after three people died in his Soho bomb attacks, was a member of the NSM. Myatt is reportedly the author of a fascist terrorist handbook and a former leader of the violent far-right group Combat 18. But now he subscribes to radical Islamist views. In an Internet essay entitled “From Neo-Nazi to Muslim,” Myatt asks:

> How was it that I, a Westerner with a history of over 25 years of political involvement in extreme right-wing organisations, a former leader of the political wing of the neo-Nazi group Combat 18, came to be standing outside a mosque with a sincere desire to go inside and convert to Islam? These were the people who I had been

> fighting on the streets, I had sworn at and had used violence against—indeed, one of my terms of imprisonment was a result of me leading a gang of skinheads in a fight against "Pakis." [I support] the killing of any Muslim who breaks his oath of loyalty to Islam, and the setting up of a Muslim superstate. I had been staunchly opposed to non-white immigration into Britain and twice jailed for violence in pursuit of my political aims spent several decades of my life fighting for what I regarded as my people, my race and my nation, and endured two terms of imprisonment arising out of my political activities. . . . But the pure authentic Islam of the revival, which recognises practical jihad (holy war) as a duty, is the only force that is capable of fighting and destroying the dishonour, the arrogance, the materialism of the West. . . . For the West, nothing is sacred, except perhaps Zionists, Zionism, the hoax of the so-called Holocaust, and the idols which the West and its lackeys worship, or pretend to worship, such as democracy. They want, and demand, that we abandon the purity of authentic Islam and either bow down before them and their idols, or accept the tame, secularised, so-called Islam which they and their apostate lackeys have created. This may well be a long war, of decades or more—and we Muslims have to plan accordingly. We must affirm practical jihad—to take part in the fight to free our lands from the *kuffar* (Unbelievers). Jihad is our duty.[24]

Myatt, who briefly became a monk after his second spell in prison, said that he became a Muslim while working long hours alone on a farm. He grew up in Africa, moved to Britain in 1967, and spent time living in Worcestershire. In July 2000, *Searchlight*, the antifascist magazine, described him as "the most ideologically-driven Nazi in Britain, preaching race war and terrorism." He issued a statement in response to the Soho nail bombings saying: "Neither myself nor anyone else connected to the NSM can be held responsible for these bombs in any way. That responsibility lies with the person who constructed them, planted them and caused them to explode. Only that person and God know the motive behind the attacks." Myatt said that "all bombs are terrible and barbaric," whether detonated by lone bombers, Western governments in Iraq, or Zionists in Palestine. "The NSM considered the creation of a revolutionary situation in this country as

necessary since it wished to build an entirely new society, based upon personal honour, and believed this could only be done by destroying the dishonourable and corrupt society of the present. However, the NSM neither preached, nor sought to incite, what is called 'racial hatred.' Instead, it strove to propagate the warrior values of honour, loyalty and duty, and make the British people aware of, and come to value, their ancestral warrior culture and warrior heritage." Myatt also said that he had given up hope of a breakthrough by the Far-Right and believed that Muslims were the best hope for combating Zionism and the West. Echoing the current reality in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, where prisons have become fertile grounds for converts to Islam, Myatt appealed to other dysfunctional people like himself to rally to his new religion:

> There will not be an uprising, a revolution, in any Western nation, by nationalists, racial nationalists, or National Socialists—because these people lack the desire, the motivation, the ethos, to do this and because they do not have the support of even a large minority of their own folk. . . . If these nationalists, or some of them, desire to aid us, to help us . . . they can do the right thing, the honourable thing, and convert, revert to Islam—accepting the superiority of Islam over and above each and every way of the West.[25]

Despite these voices that were quite widespread in Britain before July 7 struck, few were ready for the attacks, at the same time that there was awareness in wide circles that it might happen. Take this account, for example, which makes the point that British authorities were slow to recognize the growing threat of terrorism by angry British Muslims before the deadly bombings in London of July 7, though there is no evidence that the attack could have been prevented, according to the report issued in May 2006. "If more resources had been in place sooner, the chances of preventing the July attacks could have increased," stated the report by Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee. Acknowledging that its determinations were reached "largely in hindsight," the committee also concluded that no matter how extensive the government's antiterrorism efforts, "it seems highly unlikely that it will be possible to stop all attacks." The parliamentary report on the deadliest attack in Britain since World War II, and a separate report issued by the Home Office, concluded that two of

the July 7 bombers probably had contact with al-Qa'ida during visits to Pakistan in 2003 and from late 2004 into early 2005. But they said there is no solid evidence to suggest that al-Qa'ida directly planned or directed the London attacks, in which fifty-two commuters were killed on three subway trains and a bus. The bombers, all young British Muslims who mixed chemicals for their crude bombs in a bathtub, were likely inspired by al-Qa'ida but acted on their own, motivated by "fierce antagonism to perceived injustices by the West against Muslims," the Home Office report stated. The long-awaited reports seemed unlikely to end speculation about the July 7 attack and a failed attack on July 21, in which five men were charged with getting onto London subways and a bus with bombs that failed to explode. Although British officials for years had warned of the likelihood of an attack by Islamic extremists, many Britons were shocked to learn that three of the four July 7 bombers were British-born. Had the authorities and the public heeded the press reports and interviews by Masri and Abu Hamza, they would have certainly not been surprised. David Davis, the shadow home secretary of the opposition Conservative Party, said the reports "raised more questions than answers" about what he called "a major failure of our intelligence services" to pick up earlier on the home-grown extremist threat. But he too was wrong, because the information was there, but it was simply not taken seriously. He also questioned the reports' independence from Prime Minister Tony Blair's government and security services, which, despite being the focus of key aspects of the probes, provided much of the information used to compile the reports. "It is the government's view, not an independent view," Davis said in the House of Commons.[26]

As if all this incriminating evidence of the brewing Islamic subversion in Britain and elsewhere was not sufficient to stop terrorism before it erupted, it was accompanied by the distancing of Europe, except for Britain, from the furious American reprisals after September 11, which indicated to the Islamists that they can pursue their anti-Western activities in the heart of the West almost undisturbed. For, granted that September 11 traumatized the entire West, which began to awaken to the new dangers Islam posed to its security, yet the sense of urgency and immediacy of the issues was late in coming. Until September 11, the Islamic world was considered friendly to the West, and the essentially Islamic struggles taking place in Bosnia, Kosovo, Palestine, Kashmir, or the Philippines were regarded as so remote,

incomprehensible, and irrelevant to Western culture that few bothered to look those names up in world atlases, let alone deepen their knowledge about them. But as of September 11, not only did these names begin to resound clearly in the minds of ordinary people in the West who had been unaware of them, but many rushed to read the Qur'an and works about Islam or to visit Islamic centers in the West in a quest to comprehend what makes that faith tick; and it is believed that more than a few even asked to join the ranks of the believers. So, in a small measure, the "Islam Rush" was due not to an "invading" foreign Islam that one needed to know and understand, but to the shocking realization that the "enemy" emerged from within. After all, the nineteen Islamikaze who committed the Twin Tower horror were asylum seekers in the United States who were educated there or in Europe, became acquainted with Western openness and democracy, and were expected to demonstrate loyalty to their countries of refuge. The fact that they did not and that their common denominator was their Islamic faith took the Americans, as well as the Europeans, by surprise, especially due to the Saudi and Egyptian identity of the perpetrators, and made them feel that a fifth column was growing in their midst, especially when it turned out that their operators, in this case al-Qa'ida, had organized, financed, indoctrinated, and dispatched them from the outside.

In western Europe, Australia, and Canada—the main targets of legal and illegal immigration from Muslim countries—the first thoughts of putting strictures on those immigrants began to rise, as these countries realized that some Muslim immigrants did not move to the Western democracies just to improve their lot, or to work and provide for their families who stayed behind, but that an entire scheme lay behind their move which would revolutionize the status of entire Muslim communities in the United States and Europe: from being asylum seekers, political refugees, and foreign workers, to becoming a real social and security liability. For, while many of them are grateful for their new home and go about their business, the political and religious activists among them pressure the others to take a stand on current affairs of concern to all Muslims, encourage them to demonstrate, even violently, against their own new countries and in favor of their original ones, and strive to increase their numbers and make a dent on local demography and politics. The difficulty of distinguishing the activists apart from the others makes all of them suspicious in the eye of the unsuspecting citizens of the host countries, who, while for the most part

escaping the label of “racism” by not voicing in public their concern and fear of Islam, would venture to complain privately, as they begin to feel like strangers in certain neighborhoods of their country, where even police do not dare to enter and impose order and safety. Every wave of new immigrants, legal or illegal, is aided by the previous one, which under the humanitarian excuse of “family reunion” brings entire clans in their wake. If they constituted negligible minorities, no one would be overly concerned about their impact, political or cultural, on their host countries, but as their great numbers alter the median age of the general population due to their high proportion of children, their demographic “threat” becomes apparent in the long haul.

Many naturalized Muslims, for example, some of the perpetrators of September 11 and then the London attacks of July 2005, did not hesitate to act against their hosts who have showered them with benefits; and many other Muslims, who have sought shelter in Europe, Canada, and Australia, devote their time not to assimilating into the new environment by implementing its rules, but cultivating their separate identities and building enclaves of Islam in their host countries and to their detriment. For example, far from accepting their countries’ Middle Eastern policies or their antiterrorist struggles, they protest against them, often violently.

This state of mind has become so widespread in Europe that many articles began to appear either bemoaning the fate of sinking Europe or calling for its awakening. There is a view that maybe Bin Laden did the European Muslims a disservice by precipitating his attack on America. Had he waited another ten years or so, they would have been far more firmly entrenched in the institutions and society of the various countries and may have also irreversibly infiltrated the security forces and apparatus, thus putting asleep the security services for that much longer. Then they would have been in a much more advantageous position to strike. But what happened happened, and public opinion in Europe woke up following September 11 and began to wonder about what was happening to their countries. A castigating article by George Weigel, which describes the caving-in of Europe and its consequences, sums up the situation. He tells that at the height of the morning commute on March 11, 2004, when ten bombs exploded in and around four train stations in Madrid, killing almost two hundred Spaniards and wounding some two thousand, Spain seemed to be standing firm against terror, with demonstrators around the country

wielding signs denouncing the “murderers” and “assassins.” Yet things did not hold. Seventy-two hours after the bombs had strewn arms, legs, heads, and other body parts over three train stations and a marshaling yard, the Spanish government of Jose Maria Aznar, a staunch ally of the United States and Great Britain in Iraq, was soundly defeated in an election that the socialist opposition had long sought to turn into a referendum on Spain’s role in the war on terror.

A fifty-four-page al-Qa’ida document, which came to light three months after the London bombings, speculated that the Aznar government would be unable to “suffer more than two or three strikes before pulling out [of Iraq] under pressure from its own people.” In the event, it was one strike and out—as it was for the Spanish troops in Iraq who were withdrawn shortly thereafter, just as the newly elected prime minister, Jose Luis Zapatero, had promised on the day after Spanish voters chose appeasement. At first the Madrid bombings seemed to aggravate public opinion against a conservative government, and that led to the installation of a leftist prime minister, who then proceeded to do many of the things that aggressively secularizing governments in Spain have tried to do in the past. In fact, however, it turned out that the events of the past two years in Spain are a microcosm of the two interrelated culture wars that beset western Europe today.

Several decades after the end of World War II, the European instinct for appeasement seems alive and well. French public swimming pools have been segregated by sex because of Muslim protests. “Piglet” mugs have disappeared from certain British retailers after Muslim complaints that the A.A. Milne character was offensive to Islamic sensibilities. So have Burger King chocolate ice-cream swirls, which reminded some Muslims of Arabic script from the Qur’an. Bawer reports that the British Red Cross banished Christmas trees and nativity scenes from its charity stores for fear of offending Muslims. For similar reasons, the Dutch police in the wake of the Van Gogh murder destroyed a piece of Amsterdam street art that proclaimed “Thou shalt not kill”; schoolchildren were forbidden to display Dutch flags on their backpacks because immigrants might think them “provocative.” The European media frequently censor themselves in matters relating to domestic Islamic radicalism and crimes committed by Muslims, and, with rare exceptions, their coverage of the war against terrorism makes the American mainstream media look balanced.

When domestic problems related to Muslim immigrants do come to light, the typical European reaction, according to Bawer, is usually one of self-critique. In Malmo, Sweden, the country's third largest city, rapes, robberies, school burnings, "honor" killings, and anti-semitic agitation got so out of hand that large numbers of native Swedes reportedly moved out; the government blamed Malmo's problems instead on Swedish racism and chastised those who had wrongly conceived of integration in "two hierarchically ordered categories, a 'we' who shall integrate and a 'they' who shall be integrated." Belgium, for its part, has established a governmental Center for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (CEEOR) that recently sued a manufacturer of security garage gates whose Moroccan employees work only in the factory and are not sent out to install the gates in Belgian homes. By contrast, according to the Belgian journalist Paul Belien, whose online *"Brussels Journal"* (www.brusselsjournal.com) is an important source of information on Europe's culture wars, CEEOR declined to prosecute a Muslim who created an anti-semitic cartoon series, on the grounds that doing so would "inflame the situation." Perhaps predictably, European Jews have frequently played the role of the canary in the mineshaft amid the trials of Islamic integration. Two years ago, a Parisian disc jockey was brutally murdered, his assailant crying "I have killed my Jew. I will go to heaven." That same night, another Muslim murdered a Jewish woman while her daughter watched, horrified. Yet at the time, as the columnist Mark Steyn has written, "no major French newspaper carried the story" of these homicides. In February 2006, the French media did report on the gruesome murder of a twenty-three-year-old Jewish man, Ilan Halimi, who had been tortured for three weeks by an Islamist gang; his screams under torture were heard by his family during phone calls demanding ransom while, Steyn reports, "the torturers read out verses from the Qur'an." He quotes one police detective shrugging off the jihadist dimension of the horror by saying that it was all rather simple: "Jews equal money."[27]

These patterns of sedition and appeasement finally came to global attention in early 2006 in the Danish cartoons jihad. The cartoons themselves, depicting Muhammed, caused little comment in Denmark or anywhere else when they were originally published months earlier in the Copenhagen daily *Jyllands-Posten.* But after Islamist Danish imams began agitating throughout the Middle East (aided by three additional and far

more offensive cartoons of their own devising), an international furor erupted, with dozens of people killed by rioting Muslims in Europe, Africa, and Asia. As Henrik Bering put it in the *Weekly Standard*, "the Danes were suddenly the most hated people on earth, with their embassies under attack, their flag being burned, and their consciousness being raised by lectures on religious tolerance from Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other beacons of enlightenment." The response from Europe, in the main, was to intensify appeasement. Thus the Italian "reforms minister," Roberto Calderoli, was forced to resign for having worn a T-shirt featuring one of the offending cartoons—a "thoughtless action" that, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi deduced, had caused a riot outside the Italian consulate in Benghazi in which eleven people were killed. Newspapers that ran the cartoons were put under intense political pressure; some journalists faced criminal charges; websites were forced to close. The pan-European Carrefour supermarket chain, bowing to Islamist demands for a boycott of Danish goods, placed signs in its stores in both Arabic and English expressing "solidarity" with the "Islamic community" and noting, inelegantly if revealingly, "Carrefour don't carry Danish products." The Norwegian government forced the editor of a Christian publication to apologize publicly for printing the Danish cartoons; at his press conference, the hapless editor was surrounded by Norwegian cabinet ministers and imams. EU Foreign Minister Javier Solana groveled his way from one Arab nation to another, pleading that Europeans shared the "anguish" of Muslims "offended" by the Danish cartoons. Not to be outdone, the EU's justice minister, Franco Frattini, announced that the EU would establish a "media code" to encourage "prudence"—"prudence" being a synonym for "surrender," regardless of one's view of the artistic merits of, or the cultural sensitivity displayed by, the world's most notorious cartoons. For all the blindness of the politicians who in the 1930s attempted to appease totalitarian aggression, they at least thought that they were thereby preserving their way of life. Bruce Bawer (following the researcher and author Bat Ye'or) suggests that twenty-first-century Europe's appeasement of Islamists amounts to a self-inflicted *dhimmitude:* in an attempt to slow the advance of a rising Islamist tide, many of Europe's national and transnational political leaders are surrendering core aspects of sovereignty and turning Europe's native populations into second- and third-class citizens in their own countries.[28]

On the anti-semitic front, France as well as Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Poland have all made Holocaust denial illegal, according to the "Anti-Defamation League." But they allow actual attacks on Jews by Muslims to continue! "When a Dutch family comes back to Holland after eight years of living in Israel, people tend to assume its members are Jewish." So says Leon Meijer, and he should know. Meijer, who completed his doctorate at the Technion in Haifa, learned that lesson the hard way when his eleven-year-old daughter was told by a classmate soon after her return: "It's a pity Hitler didn't finish the job." Meijer was shocked not only by the comment, but by the discovery that the Netherlands has no laws clearly outlawing Holocaust denial. Now, six years later, he has drafted legislation which would do just that. Under his proposal, individuals who deny or glorify genocide with the intent to hurt others could be fined or sentenced to up to a year in jail. The law would be added to current legislation prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race and religion. Meijer, who serves as an adviser to the Christian Union party, which is sponsoring the legislation, described the measure as more urgent now that "echoes" of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's denials of the Holocaust could be heard in Holland. "People copy these kinds of remarks," he said, also noting that the number of Holocaust survivors who can personally testify to what happened during World War II is dwindling. Though the Christian Union holds only three seats in the 150-member Parliament, Meijer said that his bill enjoys a good deal of support. Even so, it would take at least six to nine months to approve. He noted that possible pitfalls include fears that the law would limit free speech, which is one reason he offered to explain why Holland, unlike its neighbors, hasn't banned Holocaust denial outright.

Dutch Jewish community leader Ronny Naftaniel said the proposed law could also encounter political obstacles. Since the law isn't limited to the Holocaust but includes all genocide as defined by the International Criminal Court, objections could arise based on other conflicts, such as the current crisis in Darfur or the past experience of Armenians in Turkey. "I can imagine that there will be political difficulties, but maybe it will get through," said Naftaniel, director of the Center for Information and Documentation on Israel. Even so, he praised the initiative as "a step forward." He noted that there has been prosecution of Holocaust denial under the existing Dutch antidiscrimination laws on the basis that negation

of the Holocaust insults to survivors and their children. But he said that any move to codify the offense was welcome. “There are fewer and fewer survivors and even their children are not numerous anymore, and we think it’s important to keep the symbol of the Holocaust complete and without debate. It should not be dependent on the survivors and their children,” he said. The general climate toward Jews worsened starting in 2000, with an increase in instances of spitting, name-calling, and other forms of abuse, according to Naftaniel. But he said that the attacks, none of which were violent, had leveled off in the last few years. Still, ADL associate national director Kenneth Jacobson said “any kind of effort for a Holocaust denial law is a way of dealing with the trend that’s developing and to stop it in its tracks.” He noted, however, that “all the polls indicate the vast majority of Europeans” are aware that the Holocaust happened.[29]

At the height of the Cartoon Affair, the Dutch Liberal Party (VVD) asked the foreign minister of their country, Ben Bot, to censure Javier Solana publicly for his too apologetic representations of solidarity with the Muslim world. Bot said that he would do so only in a closed meeting of the EU foreign ministers and intimated in a debate in Parliament that he was asked by the Danes to pursue a “hands off” policy, because they wished to calm the moods, not to escalate the affair. The Dutch remained nevertheless the least apologetic in the affair and the most insistent that European apologies had gone too far.[30] But Belgium remained obtuse in its belief of fighting “Islamophobia,” even at the price of letting down its values and exposing its other minorities to Muslim harassment. In March 2006, a persecuted Aramaic priest, Father Samuel, who fled his native land for the safety of Europe, found himself in the center of a controversy. He heads a church in a Charleroi suburb, which is full to its capacity of two thousand worshippers, in spite of the elaborate 4-hour mass, and in Latin to boot. The Belgian authorities prosecuted him for Islamophobia, for incitement of hatred, and for racism, because of remarks he had made on TV in 2002, where he said that “Every thoroughly islamized Muslim child that is born in Europe is a time bomb for Western children in the future. The latter will be persecuted when they have become a minority.” These are not harsher words than what was described above as the Muslim demographic threat on Europe, so the priest, who knows something about religious persecution at the hands of Muslims in his native Turkey, stood his ground and declared that he would be proud to go to jail for speaking his mind and that Jesus too

had stood prosecution. During his sermon in his church in March 2006, he urged his flock to follow him to court. Since he came to Belgium as a refugee in the 1970s, he was assigned to the thoroughly secularized diocese of Tournai and had a clash with the bishop who dismissed him in 2001. It was thereupon that he bought the church in Charleroi where he conducts the mass in Catholic style. His congregation members come from all over, including northern France, and encompass African immigrants and many young families. His sermons include attacks not only against secularism, but also against the "Muslim invasion of the West." He tries to share his experiences in Turkey which do not bode well for Europe's future. He warns that the Muslim invasion of Europe will cause civil war.[31]

In Claire Berlinski's (the author of *Menace in Europe)* judgment,[32] "Dutch passivity is something of an oxymoron," historically speaking. In the Golden Age the Netherlands used to be a sanctuary to religious dissenters and to intellectuals like Erasmus, Spinoza, and Descartes, and in today's Netherlands the value of "tolerance" continues to reign supreme. Everything is tolerated: drugs, prostitution, euthanasia, and lately also Muslim radicalism. The Dutch government has funded hundreds of mosques and Muslim clubs headed by radical clerics who are committed to destroy the European social order, including the Dutch which has given them shelter. For example, in 2003, the Arab-European League (AEL) that was founded in Belgium by an avowed member of Hizbullah, Abu Jahjah, granted permission to open its first branch in the Netherlands. The organization already had a record of incitement and anti-semitic attacks in Antwerp and a statement of approval of the September 11 horrors. Jahjah never hid his intention to implement Shari'ah law in all Europe or his support for the Iraqi insurgents against America. Therefore Berlinski naively wonders why in the world would the Dutch lend legitimacy to this sort of terrorist organization that is bent on the destruction of Dutch culture, as if the Netherlands were alone in conducting what looks to us as foolish policy. But when both Pim Fortuyn, the leader of a right-wing party, and the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh were murdered because they spoke openly about the Muslim immigration of which they were critical, even self-satisfied and naïve Holland was shaken out of its slumber. The age of innocence has passed as scared Parliament members live in hiding, terrorist suspects are finally deported, extremist mosques are closed down, and Islamic websites are forced out of the cyberspace. But some Dutch, like the Jewish mayor of

Amsterdam, but unlike Deputy Prime Minister Zalm, continue to shun the epithet “Muslim” when they refer to immigration, to the murderous attacks on Van Gogh and Fortuyn, and to the extremism the Netherlands has been struggling against. Even when a mural was hung in Rotterdam citing the biblical prohibition “Thou Shalt not kill!,” the mayor of Rotterdam ordered it removed because an imam of a nearby mosque found it “offensive” and “racist.” One wonders how the Muslims of Holland would have reacted, had a similar civilized and inoffensive quotation of the Qur’an been banned from the public eye.[33] Berlinski went on connecting between the European haplessness to deal with the Muslim threat and the harm this causes to American interests. For example, she says that one in five Germans (and a much higher rate among Muslims worldwide) believes that September 11 was staged by the Pentagon. With such allies, who needs enemies? Or, put differently, the Europeans hold so critical views of America that they have finally deserved the status of its allies. Those Europeans who hold these nonsensical views owe that to their fervent anti-Americanism, which is connected to antimodernism and anti-semitism and derives its motivation from nostalgia to their past glory and their projection of their failed social programs. In addition, America is free of these sentiments because it does not live the memories and the sense of guilt of Auschwitz and Dachau, and can still speak about itself without self-deprecation or self-irony. The annihilation of Kurds in Iraq, the genocide in Sudan, and the extermination of Muslims in Bosnia had left the Europeans indifferent, and it was American interference alone which put an end to those horrors. And yet, furious that they lost the moral high grounds to America, they are outraged at its successes and state in their polls that America is the second largest threat to world peace. She believes that the only way for Europe to survive its takeover by Muslims is to integrate them, because they are there to stay, and the only way for the integration of these masses of Muslims is through dramatic social and economic reform. She emphasizes that the bankruptcy of multiculturalism has to bring that policy to an end; that all immigrants must learn the predominant language of the country; that all funding to mosques and Islamic centers should be cut off; that all fire-breathing imams should be deported; and that the lavish social payments and job protection must be ended.

But not all Dutch see eye to eye with these views, if one judges by the story of Rabi’a Frank (ironically the daughter of a Jew who has the same

family name of the much more tragically known Anna Frank), who converted to Islam and can see her town of Breda, on the border of the Netherlands with Belgium, only through the slits of the black veil that covers her face. While some passersby gawked at her looks and walked off to avoid coming close to her, she, a convert of eleven years when she married her Moroccan husband, pondered why every woman who wears a veil must be seen as oppressed or as a potential terrorist. Sometimes she engages people, saying “Oh, you do not have to be scared of me!” At other times she gets so annoyed that she yanks her hand under her robe as if she were holding a pistol and shouts “Boom!” This tragic situation known to Muslim terrorist-ridden countries brings her to ask: “Why do they look at me differently? It is like staring at a handicapped person in a wheelchair. It is not polite, I am a human, even if you do not like the way I appear.” But in the context of a terrorized Europe in search of its identity and future, due to the presence in its midst of a large (at least twenty million) population of Muslims who insist on being, behaving, and demonstrating as Muslims and sometimes wish even to force themselves on their hosts, it is easy to see that the plight of that woman is only one individual example of the deepening rift in west European societies. Many European societies have enacted, under the heading of “anti-terrorist laws,” legislation intended to preserve national identity, but others regard it as Islamophobia which reflects the fears from the aftermath of the bombings in the United States and Europe. In Holland, in particular, after the killing of Fortuyn and Van Gogh, the one million Muslim population (6 percent of the total, but very visible and vocal) feels particularly on edge. One of the restrictive pieces of legislation under consideration in that country, which used to be the most tolerant in Europe, is to ban women from wearing face veils *(niqab)* in public, thus perhaps forcing Rabi’a Frank and her likes to renounce what she believes in or get out of her homeland with her immigrant Moroccan husband. Another much spoken-about law is to ban speaking of any other languages but Dutch in the streets. That sounds pretty draconian, because what would innocent Greeks or Norwegians, strolling the streets of Amsterdam as of right, speak in public if they do not master Dutch. But even if they knew, who can prevent two free people from talking any languages they deem fit? [34]

Now immigrants have to pass an exam in Dutch, in Dutch history and geography, watch a film on Dutch culture that includes two gays kissing

and a topless girl walking on the beach, in order to give them the “feel” of their new society they wish to immigrate to, or to disgust them from the outset from even trying. The test is a general introduction to the Dutch way of life, including how to open a bank account. The test costs $420 each time it is taken, but the kit to prepare for it can be had for a bargain of $80. In fact the immigrants are told that they have to start all over again, and they have to understand that scenes of nudity and gay culture are part of the local experience and therefore they have to think whether they are prepared for that. Others went even further, like MP Geert Wilders, who said he was drafting a bill banning immigration to Holland for the next five years. He explained that since Dutch culture is based on Christianity, Judaism, and humanism, the Dutch should uphold it, not be embarrassed by it, because this is what they are and want to stay. Now, there is nothing totally new in these approaches, because Belgium and France have already forbidden the veils and *burqas* in public places or public schools, as in the London school district. For Rabi’a (formerly Rebecca) things are even harder than on immigrants, because not only does she feel banned in her own country, but at times she is referred to as a “traitor” for having changed sides and relinquished her culture. But she insists that she is a woman and Dutch, she is also Muslim, and Muslim first, and that is what seems to upset people who are alien to the idea that faith can precede nationality or culture. She had decided to wear the veil after her return from the Holy Pilgrimage to Mecca, which transformed her, but her entire venture began at age fourteen when she had a crush on a sixteen-year-old Moroccan boy who had moved to Holland with his family. And though her parents (a Jewish father and Catholic mother) were not agreeable, she defied them and did not continue the relationship. And when Ali told her that he could not marry her unless she became Muslim (the reverse seldom, if ever, happens, which adds to the worries of the Dutch), because his culture (not religion, and how about hers, which was also the culture where he had immigrated by choice) was different, she decided to read the Qur’an and she fell for it. Before that conversion, when Ali’s mother knew of their intention to marry, she threatened to “break both legs” (it is not clear whether hers or his), if he went forward with his plans, but it did not occur to her that the legs of her prospective daughter-in-law were no less precious than hers or her son’s. She left the wedding ceremony before it started, because she could not take it.[35]

Rebecca's problems only started after the wedding, because while she smiled to all Muslim women she encountered, her blond hair and blue eyes outlook did not make her any different from other Dutch girls, while she wanted to be recognized as Muslim. Then she changed her name to Rabi'a and began giving lectures about Islam. After she published an article on Islam in a local paper, a woman reader wrote to her: "go back to your country," where she already was. She continued studying until she became convinced to wear both the head scarf and the face veil, and prevailed on her husband to accept, though he was initially opposed to that step, due to the negative comments he heard when they went out together. She had been simply and totally swept by the injunction that a woman who reveals her body violates the tenets of Islam. When she went on pilgrimage to Mecca with her husband and her once-estranged mother-in-law, she first covered her face in public, sensing that "far from being oppressed, she felt liberated." She explained, "This *hijab*, this mark of piety is an act of faith, a symbol, for all the world to see," though in her native town of Breda she stands out as an oddity. She even rejected the supplications of her seven-year-old son to take it off due to the laughing it draws from his schoolmates, because taking it off would amount to "driving a car without a seat-belt." She is a Muslim, she felt a Muslim, she had metamorphosed her identity, and nothing would change her mind despite the head-on collision with her previous culture that she is heading to.[36]

There is talk in Amsterdam, the biggest Dutch city, about introducing legislation that would ban unemployed women who wear a *burqa* from receiving welfare payments if it prevents them from finding a job. The issue is the latest Dutch soul-searching over its relations with its own immigrants. Multicultural Netherlands is having a serious identity crisis these days, since the country's immigrant melting pot is feeling more like a powder keg. The latest spark in Holland's mini culture war came in April 2006 from the social affairs alderman for the city, a Muslim himself, who says women who wear *burqas* are having trouble finding jobs. His solution? Take it off or lose your benefits. Ahmed Aboutaleb has proposed introducing legislation that would allow the city to cut welfare payments to women who insist on wearing a burqa if it can prove the full-body covering is the reason she can't find a job. "Nobody wants to hire someone with a burqa," he told the Dutch women's magazine *Opzij*. "In that case, I say: off with the burka and apply for work. If you don't want to do that, that's fine, but you don't

get a benefit payment." Aboutaleb, a member of Amsterdam's Labor Party (PvdA) and a Dutch citizen of Moroccan descent, made the comments in response to a recent ruling by Holland's Equality Commission siding with a Muslim woman who refused to shake hands with men at work. The politician questioned whether she should be involved in education, with such rigid self-restrictions. "She has to realize that her behavior is building enormous obstacles for her in almost every situation. This woman must recognize that she is sidelining herself and that she runs the risk of being turned down for other jobs, too." In the wake of the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic extremist in 2004, the country, once thought to be an exemplary multicultural society, began to question how well its Muslim immigrants have been integrated. Since then, the center-right government of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende has introduced laws that make it harder for married immigrants to bring their partners with them to Holland and that require prospective immigrants to take tests in their homeland on their knowledge of the Dutch society and language before they can come to the Netherlands. In December 2005, the Dutch Parliament in The Hague approved a law that would make it illegal to wear a *burqa* in public spaces. However, a commission is now seeking to determine whether the legislation is compatible with European human rights laws. The legislation was introduced by Geert Wilders, a conservative member of the Dutch Parliament who was included on the same hit list that included Theo van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the makers of the film "Submission," which is highly critical of Islam's treatment of women. Regardless of the outcome of the national law or the Amsterdam legislation, the ban would be more symbolic than anything else since there are only an estimated fifty to hundred burqa-wearing women among the one million Muslims living in the Netherlands. But Amsterdam sociologist Ruud Koopmans told the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* that a "ban on the burqa in public would be absurd. I would be surprised if the law goes through."[37]

It is therefore quite surprising that a study in the Netherlands has concluded that Islam does not conflict with Dutch values. Muslim scholars have welcomed the three-year study by the Scientific Council for Government Policy. Marzouk Abduallh Awlad, professor of Islamic Studies at the Amsterdam Free University, said: "This is indeed a step towards opening a more serious dialogue with Islam and curbing extremism irrespective of its source."[38] On the other hand, the best-selling Dutch

author Leon de Winter was questioned by *Der Spiegel* primarily about Dutch Integration Minister Rita Verdonk who made headlines with her demand that only Dutch should be spoken in public in the Netherlands. The interviewer wanted to know whether "let's do away with foreign languages" has become the new motto of a country that for years has served as the model of tolerance. He retorted: "Ms. Verdonk was falsely quoted. You can't force people to speak Dutch. How would you be able to control it? What she did say is that it is important that all people speak Dutch. There are too many foreigners here who can't speak our language." Asked whether that was one of the reasons for unemployment among the immigrants, Winter responded: "Yes, 40 percent have no job. But you also have to know that 40 percent of the Moroccan women living in our country are illiterate. How are they supposed to be in any position to provide their children with a decent education or to explain to them how an extremely tolerant society like the Netherlands functions?

All of these problems start in the living room. Too many people drop out before graduating from high school. Many want to begin their vocational training after finishing primary school, but that's too early. At that point, they don't have the same basis as the country's other youth." de Winter then addressed what is being discussed in Holland right now, namely: why does the country offer official forms in Turkish and Arabic? Why doesn't the state force people to learn Dutch? He said that such proposals that would force integration, like reeducation camps for unemployed youth or language tests for people who want to immigrate to Holland, were all pretty hopeless proposals for saving a generation that has already been lost. The parents of these children were never obligated to take charge of their own destiny. The state allowed them to live in Holland and pay their rent. He said that the problems began when the first guest workers arrived in Holland—as soon as they were let in from the third world, Holland had a guilt complex toward them and somehow saw them as "sacred victims." Then their hosts let them bring their wives and children over without having any clue that they were importing integration problems with which the Dutch had no experience. No, Holland cannot be a melting pot for its immigrants, he said, that's the United States. A social welfare state like the Netherlands can never be a country of integration. Only a country like the United States, with its weak social net, can integrate large groups of immigrants without problems. Immigrants there are forced to take two or three badly paid jobs

just to survive. That would be incompatible with European moral values. But after one or two generations in the United States, these people are integrated in society. When asked about the Mayor of Amsterdam Job Cohen's warning that unemployed immigrant youth in the city could riot as they did in Paris, he answered: "I was shocked that a politician like he, who is generally cautious in his statements, would say something like that. It's an indication that the situation is much more serious than we previously assumed. But even (in Amsterdam) you have the same causes: a lack of education and training and a lack of discipline. These youth are no longer getting any guidance and they have no idea how they are supposed to behave in society." His outlook of Islam in the Netherlands is very telling: "The mantel of Islam is often used to describe the disquiet and frustration these young men have. Much of it is a normal part of development—hormones and puberty play a natural role. That has nothing to do with religiosity. I wouldn't say that the Netherlands has suddenly become Islamophobic. These problems also exist in other countries. The Dutch aren't afraid of Islam. We just have too little work for them and that's why many are leaving."[39]

A new center for the study of radicalism and extremism that has been established in Amsterdam, which will perhaps help better understand the conduct of radical Islam, though it purports to study radicalism in general, knowing that no other faith poses such a problem to society. The Centrum voor Radicalisme en Extremisme Studies (CRES) is being hosted by the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and will bring together researchers from various universities to advance the study of religious radicalization in the Netherlands. Researcher Frank Buijs of UvA's Institute of Migration and Ethnic Studies decided there was a need for the new academic center while he was researching radicaliza-tion of Moroccan (Bouyeri, the murderer of Van Gogh, is Moroccan) youth on behalf of the Ministry for Immigration and Integration. The study found 40 percent of the Moroccan youth in the Netherlands reject Western values and democracy. And 6-7 percent are prepared to use force to defend Islam. The majority are opposed to freedom of speech for offensive statements, particularly criticism of Islam, but offenses by Muslims to other faiths seem to be more tolerated. Buijs is the first director of CRES, which will provide information to people who come into contact with radicalism as part of their work. Buijs said that the government must provide alternatives for *Salafism* (following the ancients

—*aslaf*), a contemporary movement in Sunni Islam that seeks a return to the "pure Islam" of the days of Muhammed. But Buijs did not explain why the government, who did not invent Salafism, should provide an antidote for it. Contrary to his belief that since Salafism is a gaining ground in the Netherlands the government must do more to stimulate a more pluralistic form of Islam, any involvement by the authorities in reforming Islam by generating more varieties of it will be construed by Muslims as unwarranted interference in their faith. Buijs and his colleagues discuss the issue in a new book *Strijders van eigen bodem—radicale en democratische moslims in Nederlan* (home-grown warriors—radical and democratic Muslims in the Netherlands).[40]

The need to study radicalism, that is, Muslim radicalism, derives from the estimate among Dutch and European citizenry in general that an Islam that is unwilling to acculturate into the host culture of Europe will remain at odds with it. Indeed, Islam was found to be incompatible with modern Western society, according to a majority of those responding to a recent Dutch survey. Most of the people polled expressed a negative view of Islam and Muslims. The survey was released the same week that a Dutch Justice Ministry report said radical Islam had made significant inroads among the country's immigrants, posing a threat to the nation's security. Known for its *laissez-faire* social attitudes, the sharp turn in public opinion against Islam in the Netherlands has sparked a debate that has prompted criticism of Queen Beatrix and the government for allegedly abandoning Western values in the face of Muslim pressure. The poll conducted by Dutch research firm Motivaction for the GPD newspaper chain on June 2, 2006, found that 63 percent of those surveyed believed Islam was incompatible with modern European life. More than a quarter of respondents said Muslim immigrants were rude, lazy, intolerant, and prone to criminal behavior. They said the increase in Muslim immigration has had a negative effect on civic and social life, with almost 80 percent saying relations between Muslims and non-Muslims had become strained. Government-backed initiatives to acculturate Muslim immigrants had failed, respondents said, as most believed that many immigrants had walled themselves off from Western society in an attempt to create outposts of their home cultures on Dutch soil. Some government-sponsored moves to welcome Muslims have sparked controversy.

In an address to Parliament on June 6, Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende applauded Queen Beatrix for agreeing not to shake hands with the leaders of the Mobarak mosque in The Hague during a state visit to commemorate the mosque's fiftieth anniversary on June 2. Queen Beatrix agreed not to shake hands with the Muslim leaders in deference to their belief that Islam forbids men to touch women other than their wives. This move was a laudable "example of religious tolerance," the prime minister said, that would make Muslims feel more welcome. Conservative MP Geert Wilders said he was "purple" with rage at the queen's decision, calling it "*dhimmi* behavior." (A *dhimmi* is a person of the *dhimma,* an Arabic term that refers in Islamic law to the pact of surrender contracted between non-Muslims and their Muslim conquerors.) "The Queen and Prime Minister Balkenende are putting Dutch norms and values in a bargain sale," Wilders said. The MP said the government, "under the pretext of tolerance, is selling out Dutch values such as equality between men and women." "We must instead make the case for Dutch norms and values," Wilders said. *The Brussels Journal* commented that Queen Beatrix's tolerance appeared only to extend to Muslims, reporting that in 1982 she refused to meet with an orthodox Jewish group because they didn't shake hands with women. According to the justice and interior ministers, the threat of terrorism from radical Islam is "substantial." The ministers told Parliament that a "rapid spread of the Jihadistic ideology" was underway, with a number of moderate mosques passing under the control of Islamist ideologues. "Radical movements, like *Salafism,* are currently gaining influence rapidly, both on the Internet and in more and more mosques. They prefer to use the Dutch language so that more and more young Muslims are reached, with all possible radicalization risks as a result," the ministers said. The ministry report warned of possible repercussions from the upcoming release of former Dutch MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali's film *Submission 2,* which criticizes Islam for intolerance of homosexuals. The report said, "Controversial debates or artistic quotes about Islam in the Netherlands can be abused by radical Muslims abroad to agitate against the Netherlands." Citing the Muhammed cartoon controversy in Denmark, the report suggested that Muslim reaction to Hirsi Ali's film could be violent. "Not only political interests but also economic interests as well as the safety of embassies and Dutch troops abroad can be in jeopardy," the report said.[41]

The service of Dutch troops abroad, especially in what was repudiated by Muslims as anti-Islamic causes, indeed had posed an immediate danger to the country's military. Spain had summarily surrendered to them after the Madrid massacre, but Holland seemed as yet in no mood to submit, especially as it saw its Muslims celebrating the death of the troops who were killed in the service of their country. The leader of the Dutch-Belgian AEL has come out in support of killing Dutch troops serving in Iraq. "I consider every death of an American, British or Dutch soldier as a victory," Dyab Abou Jahjah said in an interview with Flemish newspaper *Het Laatste Nieuws.* There were then 1,376 Dutch soldiers serving on peacekeeping duties in southern Iraq and two have been killed since the mission started in the summer of 2003. The troops were scheduled to return home in March 2005. Despite his praise for the deaths of coalition troops, Abou Jahjah said he was opposed to the beheadings of hostages in Iraq. "Beheading is ethically and religiously wrong. Muslims don't even butcher a sheep in this way," he said. What a fresh breath of fresh air to hear that Muslim radicals entertain ethical considerations of any sort! In any case, that outspoken Lebanese-born immigrant Abou Jahjah has made fewer headlines in recent times since his political aspirations met with little success in Belgium elections. He founded the AEL in 2001 in Antwerp, Belgium. The organization, which also has a branch in the Netherlands, claims to support integration, but not assimilation of Muslim and Arab immigrants into European society. And if that aspiration is to be backed by a separate Muslim political party, then it is evident that there will be neither assimilation nor integration, but only secession and perhaps rebellion against the political system. When the foundation of the Dutch branch of the organization was announced in 2003, several Dutch politicians from mainstream parties called for it to be outlawed. The Justice Ministry had to concede there were no grounds for doing so. In April 2004 the AEL "saluted" on its website the armed resistance to the United States-led coalition being mounted by "the Iraqi population" in Fallujah. Meanwhile, Abou Jahjah also spoke out strongly against racism in Flanders, claiming that the Belgium region had many more racists than the one million people who voted for the extreme right-wing group Vlaams Blok. "Flanders is a right-wing bulwark in Europe," said Abou Jahjah, who recently moved from Antwerp to the Brussels' municipality Schaarbeek. "God was not generous for Flemish people when he handed out intellect."[42]

In the face of this brewing unrest, the complacent and easy-going Dutch had to adopt new measures to fight terrorism now, and ultimately the Muslim takeover of their country. The Dutch Parliament approved new antiterrorism measures that make it easier to arrest suspects without strong evidence and hold them longer without charge. Prosecutors will be able to approve surveillance, infiltration, or wiretapping of suspects even when there is no "reasonable suspicion" that a suspect may have committed a criminal act. The new law, which goes into effect immediately, is the latest of many enacted in the Netherlands since the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States. "Evidence a terrorist attack is being prepared" will be enough to make an arrest, the Justice Ministry said in a statement. The result is that unusual investigation methods can be used more quickly against terror, since terrorists aren't easily deterred by the threat of heavy punishments. Earlier changes have included allowing the use of evidence gathered by the secret service in criminal trials, banning membership in a terrorist group, and increased penalties for terrorism-related crimes. The new law will also expand the practice of allowing spot searches by police without probable cause in "airports, industrial complexes, sports stadiums and government buildings." "Police will be able to preventatively search people, and vehicles or things without permission of a prosecutor" or judge, the ministry said. Finally, the law increases the period of time a suspect can be held without charge from three to fourteen days, which is still short of the twenty-six days Blair obtained for Britain. "During this period, grave concerns (of a crime) are no longer required in cases where a terrorist crime is suspected; a reasonable suspicion is enough," it said. There has been little protest about the loss of civil liberties from such laws in the Netherlands, where trust in government is traditionally strong. Although Dutch prosecutors lost several high-profile cases against terrorism suspects in 2002 and 2003, they have won an equal number of important convictions under the new laws. Most notable was the conviction in March of nine Muslim men of membership in the so-called "Hofstad" terrorist network. They included homegrown radical Mohammed Bouyeri, the Amsterdam-born son of Moroccan immigrants who was earlier sentenced to life in prison for the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh. Other alleged members of the same group are awaiting trial on separate charges.[43]

These harsh measures did not seem to deter the terrorists, who when prepared to die as "martyrs" have little concern for trials, which would

publicize their cause, even less for jails, which would help them to concoct the next plot and to train the next generation of fellow terrorists in the comfort and congeniality of the Dutch prisons. The following write-up about Hirsi Ali dramatizes the suffocating atmosphere in Europe, whence every critic of Islam, including Ali herself, Salman Rushdie, the Danish author of the cartoons, and such scholars as Bassam Tibi, is leaving for the safer, more welcoming shores of America. If the best people leave, Europe will gradually become a cultural and economic backwater. The irony is that the loss of its human resource will negate the reason for economic migrants to try to enter Europe. But that will of course not deter the jihadis. An economically stagnant and backward Europe will feel like home to them. Somalia-originating and Dutch politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali has been threatened repeatedly with “execution” by Islamist extremists. She lived in an apartment with bulletproof windows and is driven to work at the Dutch Parliament by armed guards, who vary the route to outfox would-be hit men. But an unexpected menace emerged closer to home: her own neighbors. They have fought to evict her, complaining that the presence of a well-known terrorist target in their luxury apartment tower in this Dutch city has upset their family lives and reduced the value of their property. “Once this lady leaves, the problem is no longer there,” says Ger Verhagen, a retired executive who owns a place two floors above the hunted politician. He says he has nothing personal against Ms. Hirsi Ali. But along with other residents, he wants to banish the fears stirred by the proximity of Holland’s most acid, and most frequently threatened, critic of Islam. Ms. Hirsi Ali’s neighbor got his wish. Three weeks after a Dutch court ordered her out of the building in response to complaints from Mr. Verhagen and other residents, she resigned from Parliament and said she would leave Holland altogether. Her decision follows a cascade of problems: angry neighbors, a government threat to revoke her citizenship, and, more generally, growing public disenchantment with her denunciations of both radical Islam and more conventional Muslim doctrines.

This means that a threatened person in a democratic country, far from being protected by law and by the solidarity of her fellow citizens, is abandoned by everybody, thus vindicating the terrorists. The travails of Ms. Hirsi Ali raise questions about how Europe, seeking calm rather than confrontation, is grappling with the challenges posed by Islamic extremism in its midst. Ms. Hirsi Ali said the attitude of her neighbors smacks of

World War II-style “appeasement.” Others say they sympathize with her predicament but fault her for polarizing society with her attacks on Islamic custom as backward and incompatible with Western values. And what about her civil rights and her freedom of expression? In late April 2006, a court in The Hague (symbolically the Seat of the International Court that systematically submits to terrorists) gave Ms. Hirsi Ali four months to vacate her apartment. Her departure, the judges of travesty ruled, was necessary to protect the “human rights” of her fearful neighbors (how about hers?). The Dutch state, which owns the apartment and charges her about $1,500 a month in rent, has appealed the decision. But announcing the end of her career in Dutch politics, as is most unbefitting a top democratic stat, she cited the ruling as the direct cause. “It is difficult to work as a parliamentarian if you have nowhere to live,” she said.[44] Holland, the model of democracy and tolerance in Europe, has yielded to terrorist threats, as it had yielded to Nazi terrorism in the dark days of the war, when its Jews were systematically turned over to the Nazis and sent to the camps. What an illustrious record!

Before her announcement, which touched off a political firestorm, the eviction order had stirred little public outrage. On state television, a satirical talk show host joked about it, asking a guest—the Dutch lawyer of an Islamist militant who killed filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in 2004—whether Ms. Hirsi Ali would be safest living in a mosque, at Guantanamo Bay, or “six feet under in a garden.” The audience roared with laughter. Ms. Hirsi Ali gave a speech in Berlin earlier in 2006 entitled “The Right to Offend” and lamented her eviction as a triumph of self-interest over solidarity. In a trademark flash of criticism, she also evoked the debate “over what people did during the Second World War.” She says caustically: “My neighbors seem to confirm the critical view that very few Dutch people were brave enough” during the Nazi occupation. Many Europeans initially rallied to President George W. Bush’s “with-us-or-against-us” approach to combating extremism after the bombings in Madrid in early 2004 and the subsequent murder in Amsterdam of Mr. Van Gogh, the filmmaker. Since then, however, this united front has narrowed in many parts of Europe to a populist battle against immigration. Some now see Islamist violence and the ideology that fuels it as a threat that can be tamed, or at least kept at a distance, by avoiding provocation. Earlier in June 2006, she joined Vice President Dick Cheney and others in Philadelphia to honor Bernard Lewis,

the British-born scholar who helped shape White House thinking about the Middle East after September 11. She also spoke at Harvard University and the New York Public Library. When she returned to Holland, Ms. Hirsi Ali received a different reception—a stormy debate over whether she should be stripped of her Dutch citizenship and deported. The clamor followed a documentary broadcast in which she expanded upon an earlier admission that she had lied on a 1992 application for refugee status. Ms. Hirsi Ali said that the country's immigration minister, a nominal ally, had told her Monday that her passport, granted in 1997, would be annulled. Many Dutch consider her brave but disruptive and too confrontational, the way justice seekers are usually viewed as troublemakers. She had worked closely with the controversial Mr. Van Gogh before his murder, writing and narrating his last film "Submission," which infuriated Muslims and which many non-Muslims considered gratuitously offensive. A polemic against Islamic attitudes toward women, the short film featured semi-naked actresses, with passages from the Qur'an scrawled on their bodies. She clashed with a leader of her own center-right Liberal Party, whom she branded a "reactionary," and has been pilloried by politicians on the left, who mock her fury but fear her tart tongue. Many moderate Muslims detest her; radicals want her dead. "She spits in the face of all Muslims," says Jan Schoonenboom, the head of a government-sponsored research project on Islam. He says he regrets the eviction campaign but says she's partly to blame for stirring Muslim anger. In April, his think tank, the Scientific Council for Government Policy, issued a report that, contrary to other surveys, it found no fundamental clash between Islamic and Western values and condemned a "climate of confrontation and stereotypical thinking." The council, which helps set Dutch policy, urged Holland and other European countries to reach out to Islamist groups abroad that have been involved in terrorism, such as Hamas and Hizbullah.[45] One can hardly imagine a surer way to legitimize those terrorist groups and boost their self-confidence and morale.

"They're just sticking their heads in the sand," responds Ms. Hirsi Ali, who dismisses the report as a "political pamphlet to suit the dreams of people who want to believe there is not a problem." Across Europe, dozens of people are now in hiding or under police protection because of threats from Muslim extremists, instead of the Muslims hiding; is that the lesson in democracy that Europe wishes to teach its immigrants: that the rightful and

the law-abiding hide while the wild and lawless exhibit their criminal deeds and threats in public undisturbed? Dutch police say politicians reported 121 death threats in 2005. The number in 2006 will likely be much higher. Geert Wilders, a right-wing member of the Parliament who also lives in a high-security apartment owned by the state, says he has received 120 menacing emails and letters since January 2006. One of the latest reads: “Oh you cursed infidel! Don’t think you are safe from our mighty organization. . . . It is our wish to kill you by decapitation. Your infidel blood will flow freely on cursed Dutch streets!” In Germany, several researchers, journalists, and members of Parliament receive police protection because of threats by radical Muslims. Hans-Peter Raddatz, an Islamic studies expert under police protection, recently moved to the United States, adding himself to the long list of European expatriates who seek safety in the United States once their countries have failed them. Flemming Rose, the culture editor of the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, was also mulling a move to America, at the urging of friends and security contacts, adding yet another lesson to the Muslim immigrants: they have priority in enjoying what their Western host countries have to offer over their native countrymen who are compelled to go into exile. Since Flemming set off a global storm by publishing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed, he and the twelve Danish cartoonists who drew the caricatures are staying out of public for fear of attack. Citizens of a democracy living in fear? Unheard of. Mr. Rose complains that Europe is going wobbly. At the height of the cartoon furor in February 2006, Danish businessmen who criticized their publication were denounced as traitors to free speech. Since then, a segment of the public, eager for a return to calm, has favored a more conciliatory approach toward Muslim anger, Mr. Rose says. “I think it is very dangerous to give in to intimidation, because it sends a signal: If you threaten enough, we will do as you please,” says Mr. Rose. The United States has sometimes sent mixed signals as well. During the cartoon uproar, Washington at first denounced the drawings. As the violence grew, it stressed the importance of free speech. Determining how to respond to radical Islam “is the key culture war in Europe,” Mr. Rose contends. “This will be the big issue for decades.” Europe’s large Muslim population has been largely ghettoized. Finding solutions, he says, involves such prickly questions as how to reform welfare systems and how best to absorb immigrants.[46] This state of affairs where Muslims feel vindicated and watch the state institutions buckle in their favor produces a direct

radicaliza-tion of their demands and deeds. Radical Muslims are in fact rapidly gaining influence in more and more Dutch mosques, according to Justice Minister Piet Hein Donner and Home Affairs Minister Johan Remkes. In a letter to Parliament, they also warned that “controversial debates” on Islam can fan radical Islam. The terrorism threat in the Netherlands is “unabatedly substantial,” according to the ministers. “The rapid spread of the Jihadistic ideology via the virtual networks on the Internet contributes to this,” they reported in their fourth Terrorism Threat Progress Report. “Radical movements, like *Salafism* (a puritan Islam), are currently gaining influence rapidly, both on the Internet and in more and more mosques. They prefer to use the Dutch language, so that more and more young Muslims are reached, with all possible radicalisation risks as a result.” Remkes and Donner also stated that radicalism within the army is rising. Radical Islamic networks active in the Netherlands “are currently orientating themselves more strongly internationally than previously.” This is mainly “due to the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan.” “The negative picture can deteriorate further because local questions, such as controversial debates on Islam, attract international attention. Such cases are grist to the mills of ultra-orthodox and radical movements such as the *Salafists”* The substantial threat is being “somewhat tempered” by a “gradually strengthening preparedness by the Islamic community to acknowledge and combat the problems of radicalisation and recruitment.” Various initiatives are being taken to “foster diversity in the politico-religious debate as a counterbalance to radical messages.” Also, “more and more local authorities” are aware of the need to tackle radicalization in their municipality. “Not only the four big cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague) now have a specific policy for radicalisation, but smaller municipalities like Ede and Helmond have begun their own tackling of radicalisation.” For this, it is very important that they work together on this in a “balanced manner.” In their letter, Remkes and Donner also announce that a specialized police team for terrorist arrests, the Special Interventions Service (DSI), is expected to be ready in the course of 2006. Finally, an overview is given in the letter of the state of affairs on various aspects of terrorism policy, including international cooperation. Representatives of the twenty local authorities in the Rotterdam region announced they are making a working visit to London and Toronto in October 2006, to exchange information with local authorities on early signaling of “radicalisation

among specific population groups," said Rotterdam police chief Aad Meijboom.[47]

A dense tug of war has remained between officials who tend to understate the dangers of Islam and the alarmists who tend to exaggerate the threats. Even when one understands lucidly the situation, one must listen and understand the tension between the two stands, for the decisions regarding the Muslim policy of European countries will depend on the outcome of those debates, both in the Netherlands and in all of Europe. We are told that an unjustified fear of and aversion to Islam there should have far more criticism of friendly countries such as the United States, Israel, and Russia, according to the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR). That approach, which spells out appeasement and accommodation, even at the prize of bashing the United States and its allies, has been the prevailing one in the officialdom of European countries, which believes that by smoothing over the differences and pretending that they do not exist, things would work for the better. WRR researcher Jan Schoonenboom is worried about "Islam-bashing" in the debate in the Netherlands. The frequently heard statement that Islam in principle conflicts with democracy and human rights is wrong, he declares. "If you, as a Muslim in the Netherlands, keep hearing only that Islam is the equivalent of violence and that you belong to a fifth column, then you feel alien. In the debate, many big words are used without being based on facts." But one wonders: is that the real sequence of things? Is it true that the Muslims first heard they were a fifth column and were bashed before they turned to violence, or the other way round, in the Netherlands of all places, where they went on rampage and were tolerated and repeatedly exonerated by their hosts, before they were accused of wrong doings after they abused of the freedoms and hospitality accorded to them? He continued: "Look, for example, at the warnings of the Christian democrats (CDA) parliamentary leader Verhagen about the introduction of the *Shari'a*. As if we in the Netherlands would then get corporal punishment! I do not know whether it is ignorance or design on the part of Verhagen, but it does not make sense and is irresponsible.' Why? Did Verhagen utter his fear of corporal punishment? No, he just suspects that *Shari'a* law may be imposed on his country, as the Muslim radicals of Europe repeatedly assure us. Schoonenboom is certainly entitled to elect the kind of law he wishes to live under, but he cannot allay the fears of his compatriots of being overtaken by another legal system not of their doing

and alien to them, corporal punishment or not, or 'merely' imposing forced marriages, the subjugation of women, cultivating hatred of non-believers, engaging in Jihad, and the like."[48]

Schoonenboom was commenting on "Dynamics in Islamic Activism," a report by the WRR that was to be presented to Foreign Minister Bot. According to Schoonenboom, "we should not be so spastic about the *Shari'a."* It may be that the system leads to corporal punishment in countries like Saudi Arabia and Sudan, "but under the *Shari'a* in Morocco, family law has been reformed, very much to the advantage of women's rights." The *Shari'a* for Muslims is comparable to the Ten Commandments for Christians, in the researcher's view. "It is God's plan for human nature." But according to the Commandments, man is ordered to do certain good deeds and to refrain from bad ones. The order to refrain from killing is absolute, while in the Muslim *Shari'a,* of which this researcher has no clue, enjoins its believers to launch jihad and kill, to enslave the unbelievers, and to take over the world by *da'wa* if possible, by force if necessary. The WRR researcher wipes the floor with Islam critics such as MPs Hirsi Ali, Wilders, and Verhagen, law philosopher Afshin Ellian, and Rotterdam politician Marco Pastors. "They often play on gut feelings in the debate. On fear of Islam and of Muslims. You also see that in the debate on the accession of Turkey to the EU, this country is made out to be much more Islamic than it is, and Europe much more Christian that it really is."

Such a total abdication of Europe's values and culture, and *dhimmi*-like submission to Muslim demands and complaints, without the advise and consent of his fellow citizens who make up their common country, is a far-reaching policy that is sure to be rejected by most Europeans, based not on their biases and "Islam-bashing," but on their bad experiences, such as Madrid, London, and Van Gogh. Schoonenboom advises "an adventurous foreign policy" for the Dutch government. "We must support the moderate Islamic powers (which are they?) much more, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (who are the pinnacle of Muslim radicals, so much so that the EU has declared the Hamas, their acknowledged branch, a terrorist organization) and Hezbollah in Lebanon (who have been stirring trouble and hatred in the Middle East), instead of secular movements without prospects in Muslim countries. We must talk to the Palestinian regime of Hamas. They are democratically elected. It is a terrorist movement, but so was Arafat's PLO. And the IRA in Ireland." Holland and the rest spoke to

Arafat and the PLO when they vowed to relinquish terrorism in Oslo, then they did not. Hitler also was democratically elected; was that the reason why so many Dutch supported his regime and turned against the Jews? “On the other hand, we must be much more critical regarding our friendly countries. We must address Russia more forcefully on human rights violations in Chechnya, Israel for its decades of ignoring UN resolutions and the US regarding Guantanamo Bay. In the Netherlands, there has practically never been a debate on the reasons for the invasion of Iraq and the Dutch support for this.” (. . .) “We must also get rid of hypocrisy. We protest if one Christian is sentenced to death in Afghanistan, but what do we do if it is a Muslim?” Schoonenboom denies that the WRR report is naive. It is a reaction of “a real fear of dangerous developments. Do we want to go on living in a land that is plagued by fear of attacks? A cultural change is needed here. The Netherlands cannot save the world, but we can try to influence EU policy. The battle against terrorism has got out of hand, is getting the characteristics of a clash of civilisations. (. . .) Bush is said to be considering attacking Iran or Syria. What in God’s name are we doing?”[49] This is probably, after Galloway and Livingstone in Britain, the most lopsided, cowardly, and detached-from-the-truth “analysis” of Muslims in Europe that is bound to drag all Europe into the abyss if it were heeded.

Along these lines, Foreign Minister Ben Bot explained the advantages of the Netherlands’ discussion culture to the Arabic world. He was being interviewed by the Arabic station *Al Jazeera.* In front of the camera, Bot explained that things had not come to excesses in the Netherlands following the murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by a radical Muslim, thanks to the country’s dialogue. “We call that pol-dering; we have been doing it since the 13th or 14th century. We had to discuss and cooperate, because if the dikes were broken, we would all be the victims.” The Dutch minister made a visit to Saudi Arabia and Qatar in 2006, prompted by the international “cartoon crisis.” He appears to be unimpressed by critical MPs at home, such as conservative (VVD) leader Jozias van Aartsen, who considered the trip unnecessary. According to Bot, “In the Netherlands, there is always criticism and you never do well. If I had to take this seriously, then I could never go anywhere. I would not get to Indonesia, to Russia and to Saudi Arabia.” Bot held “constructive talks” with his Saudi counterpart Prince Saud bin Faisal and with King Abdullah, but he faced a tough job with the

Secretary General of the Organisation for the Islamic Conference, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. The Turk made a series of peppery statements after a meeting with Bot. Ihsanoglu said European countries must make laws that, as well as banning *lese majeste* and Holocaust denial, also ban insulting Muhammed. He warned that the anger in Muslim circles will not go away if a repeat of the cartoons is not prevented. Ihsanoglu then compared the effect of the Danish cartoons with that of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States and the position of Muslims with that of the Jews before World War II. "The comparison with 11 September does not hold water. And the comparison with the Jews is misplaced," said Bot. He also rejected Ihsanoglu's plea for a UN resolution against blasphemy and for changing Dutch or European laws to protect what is holy in Islam. "New regulations, laws or codes of conduct we are not going to set up." Bot did, however, add that it would be sensible if "writers, journalists, cartoonists and publishers would do some reflecting. And everyone must realise what upsets the Muslims and then accept their personal responsibility." But "it must also be no taboo to discuss the indignation among Muslims." Bot wants a debate in the Netherlands on freedom of speech and the personal responsibility of every individual. The Dutch citizen will not notice much of this; while Bot is alive to the deep indignation among Muslims in Saudi Arabia, he emphasized: "I am not mounting the pulpit in the Netherlands to talk about that."[50] In that case, where are the constructive talks he had in Saudi Arabia? He is warning precisely against accepting the Muslim *Shari'a* that his adviser has so strongly counseled him and his countrymen to do.

If such pieces of "research" and "constructive" talks across the cultural divide were bound to arouse expectations among European Muslims, as more and more ignorant and naïve well-meaning Europeans drift to their camp, their antidote became the rampaging "artists" and other sorts of outrageous troublemakers whose sole goal is to inflame the tempers and cause an explosion, as if the cartoons, Van Gogh, and Hirsi were not enough. Film director Eddy Terstall is to make a film on homosexuality among Islam leaders in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The film is based on the novel *"Male Harem"* (Mannenharem) by Vinco David. David's novel is a historically based tale about male harems kept by various Islamic Mogul Emperors in India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. "During the Golden Age of Islam, people's ideas on homosexuality were far

more relaxed and liberal than they are today," Terstall stated. "Right-wing imams would do well to read some books before deciding to speak out again." Terstall is a celebrated director in the Netherlands. His last film *Simon* (2004) was awarded with four Golden Calves—a Dutch version of the Oscars. Since about a year, Terstall has been toying with the idea of going into politics. The film director is a member of Labour (PvdA) and is thinking about representing this party in the lower house. David and Terstall are to work on the script together. It is unclear whether Terstall is to direct the film himself. *Sextet* and *Vox Populi*, the last two parts of his trilogy on contemporary Dutch society, will keep him busy for at least another year. Filmmaker Theo Van Gogh was also involved in this trilogy before he was assassinated by a radical Muslim.[51] When strong-willed Dutchmen, from any domain of creativity, wish to make their imprint by commenting on the most divisive and sensitive issue of the Muslims in Europe, they add much to the confusion, because as against the government's tendency to calm the tempers, though they know and acknowledge the hopelessness of the situation, and the apologetic supporters who demean their threat, artists are not partisans and have no axe to grind, but their artistic one. So, anyone who is not side to the public debate will tend to be influenced by them.

Since the beginning of the involvement of some European countries in ganging up with America against ISIS in Syria and Lebanon, the stakes have heightened for ISIS to mount terrorist attacks against those countries where they had thought asylum, taking advantage of the freedoms and liberties accorded by democratic laws to undermine them from within. Of course, now they cite the aggression of Western countries against them, as they did on two occasions in January 2015 abd then in November 2015, as they launched massives terrorist attacks against innocent civilians in Paris (first against Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish Kosher supermarket, and then against young people who were attending a rock concert, resulting in the killing and maiming of hundreds). Whether European countries can retaliate, how, when, where and to what extent, in self defense if not as punitive actions against the Muslim terrorists, may define the future of terrorism against the West. Another great question is whether America and Europe can overcome their squeemishness and finally pronounce the construct "Islamic terrorism" and make it a preponderant thought, for as long as the source and nature of terrorism is not defined, and as long as Islamic countries enjoy the immunity of world terrorism not being

attributed to them, the terrorist bases in Islamdom and in the the West will have no reason to volunteer to proclaim their own guilt, much less to cease one-sidedly their campaigns of terror against the West. The million plus flow of Arab, mostly Muslim, refugees from the Middle East, to add their numbers to the already harsh issue of 30 million Muslims in Europe, can only make the problem worse, especially that no one knows if and how many Muslim radical *provocateurs* have infliltrated those uncontrollable masses who hide a very dangerous potential of disruption for most European countries.

Notes

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Conclusions

One of the conclusions to draw from the phenomenal advance of Islamic radicals in our contemporary world is that following centuries of submission, defeat, and quietism, Islam has overcome its shyness and reluctance, humiliation and weakness, to declare out loud and with a vengeance that the obstacles of fear were removed, the confidence in the future was restored, and the resurrection of Islam has been launched. This regained aggressive and demanding attitude applies both internationally, such as in the deeds of al-Qa'ida and ISIS and domestically in the struggles to unseat ruling tyrants and to inaugurate a new era of more responsive and participatory government, probably authoritarian rather than democratic, but nevertheless a more acceptable form of rule.

Second, the easiness with which ISIS and AQIM operatives cross borders between states on the one hand and, conversely, the difficulty of existing "states" to enforce their rule (Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Mali, Afghanistan, Somalia, and others) on the other not only augur ill for the continued existence of territorial states in the Islamic world, but also facilitate, indeed invite, the spread of supernational forms of government like the ISIS or the caliphate advocated by the Muslim Brothers and other radical movements.

Third, the practical retreat of the West from the Islamic world, and its growing reluctance to involve itself in its affairs, especially when domestic disturbances and civil wars are concerned (e.g., Libya, Syria, Yemen, Iraq), is likely to feed the process of the islamization of those countries and the taking over of power by the radicals there.

Fourth, the success of islamization in already Islamic countries will encourage radical Muslims in the West to escalate their demands from their host countries to respond to their need of Shari'a law in the Islamic enclaves that they are attempting to erect in their elected countries of residence, and to become more vocal in their enforcing their anti-semitic and anti-Israeli attitudes in the public square and in the foreign policy arena.

Fifth, the increasingly rapid succession of Islamic radical happenings, where a new crisis emerges faster than the previous one has settled (e.g.,

ISIS while the Syrian civil war goes into its fourth year; the Boko Haram in Nigeria, while the neighboring insurrection in Mali is raging; Hamas in Gaza right after the Brothers in Egypt were crushed and overturned; and the Islamic militias in Libya following the success of the ISIS conquests), all signify that not only has the pace of radical Islamic events been picking speed but that there is perhaps a causal sequence between them, or at least the "ambience effect" which allows the success in one place to spill over to its environments.

Sixth, the extreme cruelty of the Muslim radicals toward the population they subjugate or wish to govern goes far beyond what can be humanly accepted or historically experienced, for radical Muslims like ISIS and the Jihad fighters against the Assad regime in Syria not only have no compunctions about killing civilians *en masse* or executing by beheading individually kidnapped hostages, but state their intent of force-conversion to Islam on their non-Muslim victims under threat of annihilation if they do not conform, and to enforce Shari'a law on all. That means, for example, that there is no recognition in Islamic law between civilians and military among the enemy, only between combatants and noncombatants; and since any person aiding, or simply being a member of the enemy community, is considered part of the combatants, no one is apt to escape death or slavery, not even the old, the aged, and the children.

Seventh, the old categorization of Islamic countries between conservative governments (like the monarchies) and the revolutionaries (like "socialist" Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Iraq) has been shuffled. In other words, while in old times Islamic regimes were the domain of the conservative states, which spelled monarchism, moderation, stability, Islamic tendencies, and a pro-Western stance (Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, Iran under the shah, and the Kings of Morocco, Afghanistan, and Jordan), and all shunned revolution, the revolutionaries were headed by the revolutionary regimes who had either reversed their monarchs (Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Iran, Yemen) or engineered coups against their tyrants (Syria, Pakistan), and generally stood for an alliance with the Soviet Union and its satellites. The reshuffling of these categories, which followed the Iranian Revolution, signified that it was precisely Islam that had become revolutionary, standing for the export of radical Islam anywhere it could penetrate, and paving the way for the Islamic Spring which has taken over

from the faltering Arab Spring in the 2010s (Syria, ISIS, Libya, Mali, Somalia, etc.)

Eighth, the successes of the Muslim radicals in their conquests (ISIS, Syria, Libya) will end up, temporary and fleeting as they may be, encouraging the existing radical Muslim states and inducing them to maintain the high degree of islamization of their countries, so as not to seem as lagging behind the Islamic movements which aspire either to replace them or to compete with them. Even presently classified as non-radical states like Turkey may in the future, in light of the election of its fiery and fundamentalist Prime Minster Tayyip Erdogan as president, come closer to that status. If the current popular movement of the Turkish populace to reinstall the Hagia Sophia as a mosque and the continued flirting of Erdogan with the Brothers and the Qataris are any indication of this trend, then Turkey's sinking into that status might happen earlier than we can predict today.

Ninth, the dangers that the radical states and movements pose for the rest of the Middle East may, in addition to the imminent nuclear menace of Iran, strengthen the already emerging *ad hoc* coalition between the monarchies of the Gulf (except Qatar for now) and Israel, once the United States under Obama has abdicated its role as the hegemonic power in the Gulf area in particular and in the Middle East in general.

Tenth, the competition, even the hostility and enmity, between the Sunnis and the Shi'ite Crescent in the region will escalate as Sunni movements like ISIS, al-Qa'ida, the Brothers, Islamic Jihad, Jabhat al-Nusra and Hamas, who regard Shi'ites as "worse than the Jews," make headway in their territorial conquests and propaganda gains.

Eleventh, one can fear that as a result of all of the above said, successful radical movements and states could try, if they remain unchecked, to transfer their struggle to enemy territory, as al-Qa'ida did in September 11 in the United States, its European branches did in London and Madrid, and its Asian branch did in Bali, thereafter. The key issue here will be the hundreds of Jihad fighters who will be returning to their Western countries battle-hardened from their Syrian and Iraqi front experiences and will be able and daring enough, unless monitored and neutralized in time, to wreck terrorist havoc in their home countries. We recall what the "Afghanis" had

done after the Afghanistan Jihad war (1979–89) to the countries which had helped them win that war.

Twelfth, experience and the frequency of Islamic terrorist attacks show conclusively that the attempts of embarrassed Muslim leaders and of Western ignorant leaders to apologize for acts of Islamic terror by claiming that they are "un-Islamic" and "anti-Islamic" and committed by a few who hurt the peaceful nature of Islam and Muslims turn out to be hollow and insignificant, not worthy of any serious reference. For all major Islamic radical movements, al-Qa'ida, ISIS, Hamas, Boko Haram, and the rest, perform their horrors in the name of Islam, under the war cry "Allah Akbar!" while swearing by the Qur'an and the Prophet, whose sayings are themselves replete with aggressive, cruel, dominating, and murderous statements against the unbelievers. True that those who perpetrate these acts represent only a minority of Muslims, exactly as the SS who massacred Jews in practice were an elite minority among the Nazis. But in both cases, the majority endorsed their criminal elites, cries of vengeance were heard before their operations were mounted against their innocent victims, cries of jubilation were emitted after they were completed, and the flow of volunteers to swell the ranks of the perpetrators never died up in both instances. Thus, there is no significance to the distinctions made by ignorant appeasers among Western leaders, by sycophant scholars in the West, and among some Muslim apologetics, between the Muslim "good guys" and the "Islamist bad guys." When it comes to hatred against unbelievers or the visceral hatred of the Jews, they are all united.

Finally, the politically correct politicians, scholars, and journalists of the Western world, who feed naïve and unsuspecting Western audiences with their ignorant wishful thinking of "Islam as the religion of peace" should be denounced for their misleading and baseless declarations in the face of an ever-aggressive and bellicose Islam, which knows no difference between radical and peaceful believers, for the Qur'anic obligation of Jihad embraces them all without difference. It is time that Western audiences should heed the wake-up calls of Iran, Hamas, ISIS, the Muslim Brothers, and all the rest, who have been honestly announcing in public their intentions for world domination, but Western well-wishers have been reluctant to listen.

The turn of events in the United States, announced on May 16, 2015, may signify that the main proponent of the war against ISIS has begun to

realize the real nature of Islamic terrorism. In fact, while the United States had so far strictly kept from involving its ground forces in the fight in particular and in the Syrian civil war mess in general, the special forces' incursion into Syria on May 16 was the first direct US involvement in this war since the beginning of this war a year earlier. This operation, which reported the targeting and killing of Abu Sayyaf in northeast Syria, and the taking prisoner of his wife and widow for interrogation in Iraq, clearly represents the escalation on the part of the US forces in its intervention in this war. This operation, executed merely a few days after the Camp David Summit between the United States and the heads of the Gulf Security countries, the major partners of the United States in that war, maybe signals the yielding of the United States to its partners' pressures to increase its war commitments in the Middle East in the face of the impending US nuclear agreement with Iran, mostly feared by the Arab Gulf monarchies.

Abu Sayyaf, which literally means the "Father of the Sword," is the Jihadi nickname of a Tunisian member of ISIS who had been in charge of the petroleum and gas fields that his organization had captured in Syria and Iraq, which helped finance its war of terror in the IS state, at the rate of one million dollars a day, from oil smuggled into Turkey and other adjoining countries. But remarkably, one ought to remember that in the 2000s, another menacing Abu Sayyaf (the Master of the Sword) had been terrorizing the islands of the Muslim Southern Philippines and taking Western tourist hostages for heavy ransom. It may be no coincidence that the same threatening symbolic name has been borrowed in more cases. But while in the Philippines the United States was reluctant to interfere, the Islamic State seems so much more jeopardizing to the interests of the United States and its allies that it saw fit to take the risk of escalating the war by making a public statement that President Obama had sworn to never do.

As Da'ish is constantly forging its way forward, despite the optimistic forecasts of the United States and its allies, the concern is rising in the civilized world, lest the Muslim radicals destroy in their wake not only the towns and cities they conquer, like Ramadi in the Anbar section of Iraq and the Palmyra desert in Syria, thus making their advance ever more promising and their progress unstoppable, but also irretrievably wipe out irreplaceable cultural assets. We all remember the world outrage when the Taliban in Afghanistan destroyed the great Buddhist statues in Bamiyan during their

short reign in the country (1996–2002), which even Muslim conservative countries like Saudi Arabia supplicated them not to do. But they did not budge, in view of their conviction that civilization began with Muhammed's prophecy and that anything which preceded it, either on the material or the spiritual level, was *Jahili* (i.e., belonged to the era of pre-Islam) and therefore had no right to exist under Islam. ISIS in Iraq and Syria has been enthusiastically embracing the same policy and attitude, causing untold damage to ancient art and cultural assets considered by UNESCO as world heritage. Indeed, during 2014-15 the world has watched with horror, ISIS fanatic thugs hammering at ancient works of art in Mosul and other archeological sites in Nimrod in Iraq. Now, after having taken over Palmyra, the ancient city on the trade route from the Mediterranean to Babylonia, it is feared that they will systematically destroy beyond recuperation the fabulous cultural and artistic assets of that city.

After the capture of Palmyra (Tadmor in its local appellation), the Islamic State is thought to be holding sway over half of Syria's landmass where it has reportedly begun massacring a rebellious tribe and faces no opposition to sacking the city's ancient ruins. "There are no forces to stop them [entering the ruins]," Rami Abdulrahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said. Indeed, after a week-long siege that led to the collapse of forces loyal to Bashar al-Assad, this pearl of human heritage fell to the Islamic State, and its fighters are drawing closer to the regime strongholds of Homs and Damascus and are severing supply lines to Deir Ezzor in the east, which faces an overpowering ISIS crackdown. Local activists said ISIS had imposed a curfew and was sweeping the city for remnants of Assad's forces. ISIS has also killed members of the Shaitat tribe, which fought alongside the Assad regime in Palmyra and had railed against ISIS in Deir Ezzor, a rebellion in which the militant group killed eight hundred members of the tribe. Thus, control of Palmyra leaves ISIS with unopposed access to the city's magnificent ruins, amid fears that it will destroy significant chunks of Syria's heritage as it did in Iraq. But more significantly, ISIS controls vast swaths of Syria, from Palmyra to Raqqa and Deir Ezzor in the country's east, a tract that the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimates to be 95,000 km^2, or more than half of Syria's landmass. With its seizure of the Arak and al-Hail gas fields near Palmyra, it also controls much of the country's electricity supply—those two fields power much of the Syrian regime's strongholds in the west.

On balance, ISIS also controls the vast majority of Raqqa province, its de facto capital, most of Deir Ezzor, parts of Hassakeh and the Aleppo countryside, most of the Syrian desert as well as parts of the Homs countryside and the Yarmouk refugee camp in southern Damascus. Palmyra, once a Silk Road hub and one of the cultural centers of the ancient world that occupies mythological status in Syria, is home to some of the most beautiful and well-preserved ruins of antiquity, including the Temple of Bel, built in the first century. ISIS considers the preservation of such historical ruins a form of idolatry and has destroyed temples and historic artifacts, as well as ancient Assyrian sites in Nineveh in Iraq, after conquering the province in a lightning offensive last year. The group has profited from looting such treasures, in addition to scoring propaganda victories through the wanton destruction of archaeological sites, and Palmyra is likely to face a similar fate. The fall of the city raises questions about the fighting capability and cohesion of Assad's remaining troops and allied militias, whose rapid collapse surprised observers, given their close proximity to supply lines and the strategic importance of Palmyra. The regime is stretched thin after a string of losses to rebels in Idlib in the north, who are backed by Saudi Arabia and Turkey, but residents had expected Assad's forces to withstand the siege for longer. Instead, they appear to be retrenching in the country's west, cutting their losses in the face of advances by ISIS and the opposition. Palmyra was the second city to be seized by ISIS in less than a week, after its fighters routed Iraqi security forces in Ramadi, the provincial capital of Anbar province, highlighting the group's resilience in the face of a United States-led air campaign and the limits of its strategy.

In view of the 2015 recurrent dramas in Paris, when Muslim operatives attacked the Charlie Hebdo magazine offices, due to its publication of cartoons denigrating Muhammed, that was reminiscent of the 2006 Cartoon Affair in Denmark, and the simultaneous onslaught on the Jewish supermarket in Paris, where many innocent victims were gunned down, France and the West were deeply shaken out of their slumber and forced to reckon that a serious Muslim threat jeopardized their countries. Francois Holland, the Hollande President, convened in Paris many leaders who sympathized with the plight of his country, and marched with them in protest and solidarity. But at the end of year, as a result of French joining the air campaign against ISIS in Iraq, another more murderous attacked was

launched on Paris cafes and a theater, where more than 130 innocent people, French citizens and tourists, were massacred. France declared a state of emergency, its security forces were posted in all key institutions in Paris and other cities, and French attacks on ISIS were expanded into Syria as well. Simultaneously, the wave of more than one million Muslim refugees which flooded Europe in the summer of 2015, among whom agents of Muslim radicalism must have infiltrated into Europe, brought home the message that the Muslim threat was very real and concrete. Thus, many European governments, even the most lenient and naïve among them, like Germany and Sweden, have now tightened their border controls. However, in the face of the mounting Muslim radicalism on the one hand, and the rise of the nationalist political right in most European countries, on the other, only time will tell whether the Islamic plight of Europe, and its European nationalist antidote, will be able to come to a showdown in order to arrest the threat which was detected more than a decade earlier (1) but not tackled seriously, despite the warnings from many quarters.

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